

Bitter Sweet

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March, 1985



Carolyn Chute's "The Beans of Egypt, Maine"
Sculptor Franklin Simmons
Crowley Cheese of Vermont



THE FLAVOR OF
NORTHCOUNTRY LIVING



Crowley Cheese of Vermont — page 20



ATTENTION: Young Authors BitterSweet's Annual Young People's Writing Contest is here.

Deadline: June 15th.

Rules: Poetry, Fiction or Essays may be submitted. Only one entry per student (ages 14-20). Entries *must be typed* on 8½x11 paper and must include name, address, school, and grade completed to be eligible.

Entries cannot be returned.

Send to:

P.O. Box 266, Cornish, ME 04020.

Attn: BitterSweet Writing Contest.

BRISTOL FAN

I thought I had to write to say how much I enjoy reading your magazine 'BitterSweet.' I first saw this magazine whilst on holiday last year staying at the Cornish Country Inn.

The stories of life in Maine in days gone by I find very interesting and bear a lot of similarities to life in my country during the same period.

The color photography in your magazine I find to be absolutely superb and the only regret I have is that their location is not identified, especially with those lovely churches and steeples in the September 1984 issue.

Once again many thanks for a lovely publication which I shall look forward to reading in the future.

*Alan Delbridge
Bristol, England*

DID HE?

Did he ever return? Your article on "Mush" Moore, January '85, does not mention if he completed his journey.

Just last week I asked a friend if they had ever heard of "Mush" Moore. My mother took me to see him (upon his arrival) in front of "Mac's" Variety in Auburn, Maine, I think.

*Thomas Ward
New Gloucester, Maine*

Ed. Note: The old-time brochure never said when Cecil Moore returned, but he must have, since his tales of the cross-Arctic dog-sled trek were told. Perhaps our readers remember when he returned to Lewiston, Maine, or the true story of the "fund for underprivileged boys."

HEMLOCK STRIPPING

Today I received the January issue of "BitterSweet," my second issue as a subscriber. I was delighted with the December issue but the January issue was fantastic.

I have always been intrigued by the past and researched my father's family who had timberland and lumber mills in Pennsylvania from about 1800 to 1914. I have a great deal of material and photos regarding the industry.

Consequently, I found "Recollections of Life Down on the Farm — Woods Work" of particular interest. It supplied many answers to small details I wanted to know—like the description of felling trees, details about loading the sleds and that hemlock was stripped during the summer.

Regarding this hemlock stripping, I have an ancestor born in 1758, who in 1869 "felled trees and peeled with his own hands three wagon loads of bark..." (111 yrs.)

I found "Letters From A Pioneer Wife" and all the articles very interesting and the photography of the winter scenes was superb.

The two issues I have received makes me wonder what other remarkable articles I have missed in the past. I will always be anxiously awaiting each new issue.

*Kathryn Davies
(no address given)*

ENJOYING THE READING

First I will express my pleasure at having been introduced to your magazine by a friend from Norway. I have enjoyed much of this past year's issues.

Page 6 . . .

Elaine Dougherty
Publisher

Harry Bee
Editor-in-Chief

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Correspondent

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Cross Roads

BitterSweet

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- 4 Can You Place It?
- 5 Old-time Conway photos
submitted by Janet Hounsell
- 7 Carolyn Chute: Maine's Newest Novelist
Story & Photos by Jack C. Barnes
- 13 Franklin Simmons, Maine's Gift To The World
by Beatrice H. Comas
- 17 Old Man's Journey
Fiction (reprinted) by Stewart Goodwin
- 20 Heading Out With J.W. Savage:
Carrying On A Tradition of Curds and Whey
At Crowley Cheese of Vermont
-
- Introduction to BitterSweet South
A pull-out section
-
- 27 Postage Stamp Farm by Carolyn Ekle
- 31 The Home Place: poetry and recollections
by Virginia Cyr
- 35 Homemade: Sourdough Baking
"Catching Wild Yeasts" by Georgene Bramlage
- 40 Underneath The Snow
Fiction by Carol Margaret Stewart
Photo by Bill Haynes
- 42 Readers' Room: Photo by Bill Haynes
Town Meeting by F.C.J. Smith
The Spring Itch by F. Bell
Daydreams of A New Hampshire Spring
by Ann Hart
A Cure For Cabin Fever
by Deborah Kegel Ker
- 47 A Still Life by Natalie M. Parsons
- 49 Notes From Brookfield Farm by Jack C. Barnes
- 51 A Taste of New Hampshire by Pat White.
Photos by Juanita Perkins

Cover: Bittersweet Basket by Pat Davidson Reef.

Due to technical difficulties, we are unable to publish
"Ice Cutting on the Kennebec" until a future issue.

BitterSweet Views for March

The bittersweet berries gracing our March cover provide an apt reminder of the ups and downs of our transitory existence on earth. We know the poisons and vines exist, but it's how we handle them that provides the beauty.

When we planned this month's feature article on Carolyn Chute, she was already a phenomenon. In the months since then, her novel *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* has created a new literary sensation for New England's media—and even for such erudite out-of-state publications as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Can "Good Morning, America" be far behind?

Among all the pathos and romance written about Carolyn Chute's life, I found one thing most interesting. Since childhood, Carolyn has found refuge from the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" in writing. Though she hated school and never showed anyone her major work until she met an encouraging college professor in her later life, still she never gave up writing. Her life is not so terribly unusual here, but what she made of it is.

This reminds me that, as each year at this time, we are announcing our **Young People's Writing Contest**.

Each year I am impressed by the caliber of thought expressed in the words of fledgling writers. Writing, it seems, is ever a catharsis and an examination of life's bitter and sweet moments.

This was brought home to me by the following essay, written by my daughter. It was, for her, an excellent way to handle a rather traumatic event. I wish that more young people could learn to write, as Tracy is, under the tutelage of a good English teacher. They would probably learn to reflect a little better.

Nancy Marcotte

A RITE OF PASSAGE

About to become "sweet 16," I have come to experience a trying examination of skill and patience. This is quite commonly known as the "Driver's License

Page 6 . . .

Can You Place It?

At right is a "Can You Place It" just for fun. Sent to us by Frances Bell of Halifax, Mass., it is a photo of her father. A milkman in Massachusetts, he was transporting a cow in his buggy. Fresh Milk, anyone?



Last month's photo is still unidentified. Write us at P.O. Box 266, Cornish, ME 04020 if you know its location. January's photo was the husking shed of the corn shop (cannery) in North Waterford, Maine. It was identified first by Thaxter Littlefield, East Stoneham, Maine, and then by Earl Brown, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Presented by . . .

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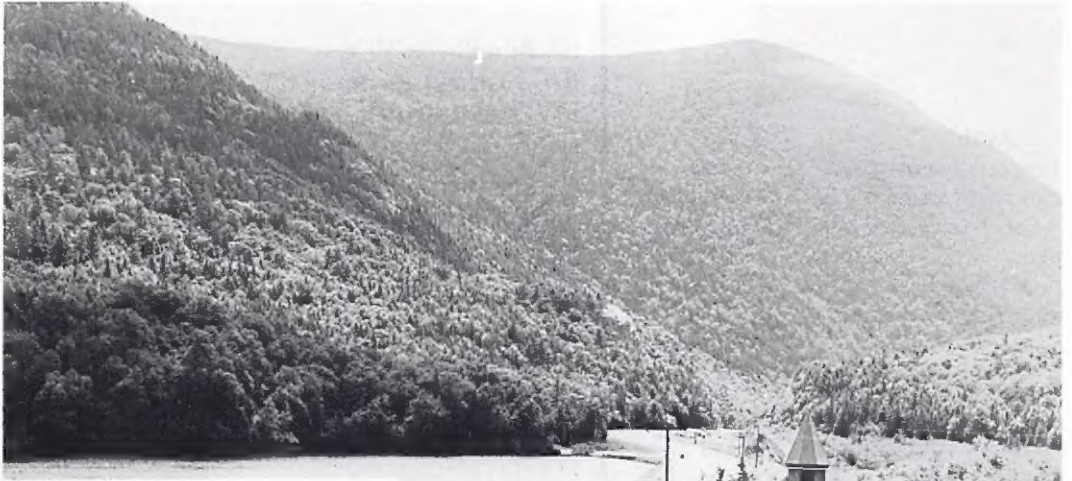


MLS

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At right is a view of Profile Lake and the old Railway Station, taken from an upper floor of the last Crawford House in Crawford Notch. Below is Diana's Baths on the west side of North Conway, taken about 1898. At bottom is the Hotel Randall, now the Eastern Slope Inn. All photos and last month's "Can You Place It" came from Janet Hounsell in Conway, N.H.



Old North Conway



... Ayah

I especially enjoy those stories and articles that carried me back in memory to when I lived in Maine so many years ago...

May you have continued success with your fine magazine.

Alice D. Moore
High Rolls, New Mexico

I have just read my first copy of your magazine and want to tell you how much I enjoyed it. What a great little magazine!

Enclosed is my check for a two year subscription. I hope you keep it just as it is, for it is just right now!

Wynona Aldrich
Lincoln, Maine

BitterSweet lived up to my expectations. Thanks for an enjoying reading experience.

Natalie M. Parsons
Asbland, New Hampshire

FAMILIAR FARMINGTON FALLS

While looking through the November issue of BitterSweet, I noticed this photograph on page forty-one. It is located in Farmington Falls, Maine. It is a photograph of the Grange Hall and what used to be the local Post Office. The person standing beside the wagon was Joyce Butterfield and the person sitting in the wagon was Sorensen.

Hazel H. Smith
Farmington, Maine

The picture on page 41 of the November issue of BitterSweet is of Main Street in Farmington Falls, Maine.

The large building was (and maybe still is) the Post Office with a rent upstairs.

The building to the left is the Grange Hall occupied by Hiawatha Grange of which my grandfather served as Master.

The residence is that of Leonard Atwood and is now owned by the Robertson family of California.

It's great to see a familiar scene.

Priscilla Rines
Gorham, Maine

... BitterSweet Views

Road Test!" I am one of the few who have been fortunate enough to experience this twice, with my third time yet to come.

Now, this is not an overly difficult task; I just don't seem to have gotten the hang of it—yet.

My main problem seems to be parallel parking. In driver's ed., I did it perfectly every time; with my mother, though, I successfully complete parallel parking only four out of every ten attempts.

Before trying my skill at driving a second time, I studied parallel parking, I practiced parallel parking, I lived parallel parking! But then the dreaded test day appeared.

I parallel parked perfectly. A little voice inside of me said, "Yay! You did it! You got your license!" Then, somewhere in "outer" space, another voice said, "I don't think you looked back. Pull ahead and try it again."

Fine. I thought to myself, "Okay, you can do this—don't worry. Just look back, and make sure he sees you." Ok. So, making sure I looked back, I pulled forward to start my second parallel parking. I spent so much time looking back, that I neglected to look forward. While I was slowly backing, the officer suddenly said, "Stop, you've hit it." I looked out the windshield to find I had bumped the left, rear bumper of the car in front of me. At the sight of this, I put the car into park and went into complete shock. I couldn't believe I had just hit a car.

After filling out a card for the driver of the other car, I had a little discussion with the officer. Actually, the officer did most of the talking. "I really want to give you your license, but I can't because of that car," he said.

I understood. I didn't say it, but I did. I don't think he should have made me do it again, but that's life. Better luck next time. Or maybe the

time after that. I'd better get it pretty soon before my permit expires. Each time I go, I reduce my mistakes. The first time I made four mistakes. The second time I made one mistake. May we hope for no mistakes on my third attempt.

Tracy Marcotte



CRAZY QUILT

March
is a
crazy quilt
of gray
sewn about a
center
of golden sunburst
and tacked with
sugar snow.

DARK AND LIGHT

I watched the day
close
its
eyes

and

I felt
its
weariness.

Gertrude Harrington
Augusta, ME



Carolyn Chute

Maine's Newest Novelist *by Jack C. Barnes*

From the depths of rural poverty—not only tucked away on many of Maine's back roads, but all too frequently glaring along the state highways as well—has emerged a blossom: an extraordinary novel written by a fascinating woman named Carolyn Chute of North Gorham, Maine. **The Beans of Egypt, Maine**, published by Ticknor and Fields in both hard cover (\$15.95) and soft cover

(\$7.95), has become the most talked about novel to be written by a Maine author in a long time. Not since Marguerite McIntire wrote the now-obscure **Carey Brown** in 1942 (set in the Waterford-Norway area) has a work of fiction been written that so graphically exposes life among the poor in rural Maine. These are people who exacerbate their poverty by perpetuating themselves indis-

criminately, out of frustration, ignorance and a need—especially for the women—to fulfill themselves in the only way they know, bearing children.

Yet, the author has skillfully delineated the element of pride which exists among many of these people who, like sturdy blades of grass, somehow manage to spring up from a wasteland to establish a small oasis



of beauty and substance. They are flower gardens amid rusting junk cars and old tires.

The Beans of Egypt, Maine is earthy. One is immediately reminded of Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, both of which were written by Caldwell while he was living in Mount Vernon, Maine. (Perhaps it was safer for him that he did live here, for he committed the unpardonable sin of washing the South's dirty linen in public.) But unlike Caldwell, Carolyn Chute makes no effort at sensationalism at the expense of those hopelessly entrapped in dire poverty. Instead she has written her book out of a sincere and ingenuous empathy for a people with whom she has been on intimate terms for all too many years. Her sincere concern for the oppressed closely parallels that of John Steinbeck; and she comes the closest perhaps of any other writer in the United States to the internationally known Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand, author of the award winning novel *Untouchable*. Also, because of the pervading naturalism throughout much of the novel, she becomes the rural counterpart of Theodore Dreiser.

It is flattering, of course, to link Carolyn Chute with such literary giants, with none of whom is she on familiar terms. By her own admission, she has never read very extensively the works of any writer except Maine's Elisabeth Olgivie. No, Carolyn Chute is very much her own writer whose simple but subtle language sets her apart as a potentially great writer of fiction. If the current sale of **The Beans of Egypt, Maine** in bookstores throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont can be used as a measuring stick in determining the volume of sales nationwide, then residents of western Maine may find themselves sitting in balcony seats for the most dramatic staging of a "rags to riches" story in many years.

Carolyn Chute, who was born in 1947, did not grow up knowing the meaning of poverty; and if she had, it is unlikely that she could have written **The Beans of Egypt, Maine**. Instead, Carolyn and her two brothers grew up in a working class family in Cape Elizabeth. Her father, Joseph Ray Penny, has for many years been employed by Holmes Electrical Distributors in the sales department.

She attended the public schools in Cape Elizabeth but developed an aversion for school right from the beginning. In 1963, at the age of sixteen, she dropped out of Cape Elizabeth High School.

"School wasn't for me. I wish I could have dropped out sooner. I never liked school one moment except dinner time, and even that was strenuous," she explains affably.

But despite Carolyn's aversion for school, she developed a real interest in writing by the time she was eight years old.

When Carolyn was growing up in Cape Elizabeth, it was much more rural then, and there were cattle and other farm animals nearby. It seemed always that just about as soon as she got attached to any of them, they would be hauled off to be butchered. It affected her deeply.

"I used to be upset; and I still am," she adds, "about animals and the way they are treated.

"I could see," she explains, "that there was a difference in the way animals were treated, so I used to write stories about a cow or a pig. It would escape just before the end, and meet a little girl. Often the little girl would help the animal escape, and they would go on an adventure together; in this pretend world I could make the story end the way I wanted it to. The reason I probably wrote was for control; it was for my emotional state."

What is amazing is the self-discipline and dedication to her writing that she developed so young in life.

"I got up at 5:00 a.m. and did as much writing as possible before I had to put in my time in school."

But she never showed any of her writings to her teachers. In fact, except for a classmate in junior high school who read a few of her stories, no one other than herself ever saw them. She explains her reluctance to submit any of her work to her teachers by saying, "My stories were

so precious to me; I didn't want my teachers to touch them, because everything I ever did in school was attacked by them. I even had a nightmare when I was an adult that my home economics teacher was ripping all my stories up and throwing them around." And then frankly, but in a congenial tone of voice totally free of malice and acrimony, she adds, "I think it was because she threatened my dignity while in school."

Shortly after Carolyn dropped out of high school in 1963, she was married and had a daughter Joannah, who is now twenty, married, and has a young son—making Carolyn Chute a grandmother at the ripe old age of thirty-seven. After eight years, however, the marriage ended in a divorce; but Carolyn and Jim Hawkes have remained good friends.

"He's a great guy," she beams, "but we just didn't get along. I wasn't the right girl for him."

It was not until after her divorce when she went to work in a factory for minimum wages that she was introduced to the traumatic world of poverty.

"As a child," I lived a very, very sheltered life. I didn't know there was real suffering going on out there. I think that is what enrages me so; I never took it for granted."

It is as though Carolyn Chute were a female reincarnation of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, who upon seeing pain and misery for the first time asked, "Why is there suffering in this world?"

Neither Carolyn nor Michael Chute, her second husband (whom she met at a Sebago turkey shoot), has the basic skills to work at anything but temporary jobs which pay minimum wages. Michael has logged, gardened, and worked in a junk yard; and Carolyn, who looks and dresses much in the manner of a Russian peasant woman in a novel, has worked in potato harvests, at a shoe

"I got up at 5:00 a.m. and did as much writing as possible before I had to put in my time in school."

factory in a poultry processing plant, and has scrubbed floors for whoever would hire her.

"Until my novel came out, we didn't earn more than \$2000 a year," Carolyn laments.

Yes, and there was the time when they were in Vermont trying to locate work without any income and their food stamps were cut. They somehow struggled through, living on soup, water, and onions. "We really know what it is like to be hungry," she says.

The real pathos, however, has to do with a small gravestone that is propped up against the wall in their living room near a woodstove, a grim reminder that her little son by Michael died because of government bureaucracy and their poverty. Carolyn was in labor over two weeks before the child was born dead from dehydration.

"I lost my medical card because we

made about eighty dollars a week, so I had to go to the clinic; but the clinic was too crowded. I went into labor, but the doctors said to go home and wait 'til the pains progressed. The pains were excruciating and exhausting. They were close together but not close enough. This went on for almost two weeks. During this time I called twice to see if they would admit me. But they acted like I was getting excited over nothing. Finally the Gorham Rescue Squad on duty insisted on taking me in regardless. I had a temperature of 104 and the baby was dying. His name was Reuben. He was beautiful."

Come spring the tiny gravestone will be taken to the quiet little hamlet of Maplewood in Parsonsfield and erected on the grave.

But the writer never gave up. Carolyn has several qualities in her favor—innate intelligence, perseverance, tremendous energy, and the remarkable ability to write—and so she was able to put her pen to work earning a little money each month for three years as a correspondent for the *Portland Evening Express*. She enjoyed doing it, and it proved to be both a valuable training for her

Carolyn & Michael Chute



as a writer and a catalyst to write more and more, despite times when it was difficult to concentrate because she was going to college full time and rearing her young daughter. But now, with the exception of the gagging and honking of geese named Omar and Olive just outside the window of the cramped room where she writes, the days and nights are quieter (despite their location in a clustered neighborhood). Michael is a quiet man, who has learned to move silently about the house; and with his jet-black beard and nondescript woodsman's clothes, looks like a character right out of her novel. There is no telephone to shatter her stream of thought; and she proudly points out that the Chute household is without a television set. When Carolyn was growing up, she manifested little interest in sitting idly before a "tube," as she calls it.

"I was never one to be bored," she explains. "I was out a lot in the fields; I could always find something to do."

Eventually Carolyn decided she wanted her high school diploma, so she began attending classes at Portland Adult Evening School. Then one sultry summer's evening while she was sitting around a picnic table with friends, someone mentioned that one could take courses at the University of Southern Maine either on the Portland or Gorham campus. So Carolyn signed up for a course; and, whenever she could scrape up a little money, she returned to college to take another course. Since she thought she might be interested in doing some social work, she at first took psychology and sociology courses. Her compassion for animals, however, soon led to her house becoming temporarily overpopulated with domestic rats used in the psychology laboratory which were destined to be exterminated at the end of the semester. Carolyn was incensed when she learned how callously the

affectionate melange was to be disposed of; so she collected them, one by one, and took them home—consequently saving them from death row.

This intrinsic tendency to associate herself with rejected animals has been extended more and more to people, particularly as the Chutes themselves became deeply enmeshed in a substandard level of existence. This concern for the rejected segment of our rural society permeates *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*.

One problem that neophyte Carolyn Chute has had to more or less accept is having Maine expressions and names for things changed by her New York editor, who is unfamiliar with regional linguistics. For example, her use of "sideboard" was, after a mild diatribe, changed to "counter," a word more comprehensible to New Yorkers. "But when I tell Michael I left something for him in the kitchen, I say, 'Michael, I put it on the sideboard,' not counter. Now, I have read the copy of Sanford Phippen's new book of short stories called *The Police Know Everything* that he was so kind to send to me, and he got his 'sideboard' in all right!"

In time, however, her affinity for writing caused her to gravitate toward the English department and writing courses. She took a course from Ken Rosen on the Portland campus, and it was then that she really discovered how exciting college can really be.

"It was a lecture type course," she recalls. "His courses are very exciting. He is so dramatic! You don't fall

asleep in his class. Ken Rosen is so creative, verbally, that you just pick up on things. I'd be writing all the way home from class."

Did Ken Rosen actually help her write *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*?

"I never had anybody really work with me on the novel, although I may have showed him a little piece of it. What I really gained from Ken Rosen was encouragement. When you write, the only way you can see your mistakes is when you can see them yourself; this way you can put miles and miles of writing behind you, and the only way you are going to do that is to be encouraged."

Ken Rosen, professor of English at the University of Southern Maine refers to his former student as "a very talented writer and an innate poet."

Carolyn talks little about her poetry, but she has had some poems published. As her popularity increases, a book of her verses seems possible. One has every right to expect that her poetry will have as powerful an impact upon the reader as her prose.

Carolyn openly confesses that she has real problems with spelling. "Have you noticed," she asks, "that I use all little words?"

But it is this simplicity of words that she carefully selects for effect that packs power into every line she writes. As Ken Rosen so aptly puts it, "Her choice of words—ordinary words—become surprises when she uses them."

"This is quite true," echoes Margaret Dickson—who has written two outstanding novels with rural Maine settings (*Octavia's Hill* and *Maddy's Song*). "Every word has been chosen with great care, and each serves a function." And then she adds, "Carolyn Chute has a really unique vision of the people she writes about."

The opening paragraph in *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*, where Earlene Pomerleau (the dominating female character in the novel, who

becomes hopelessly entangled in the jungle world of the ubiquitous Beans) is narrating, is indicative of Carolyn Chute's simple but dynamic style of writing in the present tense:

We've got a ranch house. Daddy built it. Daddy says it's called RANCH 'cause it's like houses out West which cowboys sleep in. There's a picture window in all ranch houses and if you're in one of 'em out West, you can look out and see the cattle eatin' grass on the plains and the cowboys ridin' around with lassos and tall hats. But we ain't got nuthin' like that here in Egypt, Maine. All Daddy and I got to look out at is the Beans. Daddy says the Beans are uncivilized animals. PREDATORS, he calls 'em.

"If it runs, a Bean will shoot it! If it falls, a Bean will eat it," Daddy says, and his lip curls. A million times Daddy says, "Earlene, don't go over on the Beans' side of the right-of-way. Not ever!"

One problem that neophyte Carolyn Chute has had to more or less accept is having Maine expressions and names for things changed by her New York editor, who is unfamiliar with regional linguistics. For example, her use of "sideboard" was, after a mild diatribe, changed to "counter," a word more comprehensible to New Yorkers. "But when I tell Michael I left something for him in the kitchen, I say, 'Michael, I put it on the sideboard,' not counter. Now, I have read the copy of Sanford Phippen's new book of short stories called **The Police Know Everything** that he was so kind to send to me, and he got his 'sideboard' in all right!" she exclaims sardonically.

Carolyn has attained a level of maturity rarely reached by beginning novelists in as much as she insists upon reworking every passage until it becomes smooth and fulgent.

"I never send anything out until it is ready; and, therefore, I get very few rejections. It is like when I went



for my driver's test; I didn't go until I was ready. I don't want to make a fool of myself."

How long did Carolyn labor on her first novel?

"Actually," she explains, "I was working on the characters for years, moving them about. Some who were in the novel in the beginning are not there now, and new ones were added as the novel progressed."

For awhile Carolyn was working on two novels simultaneously. When it became obvious that one was progressing and the other stagnating, she junked the one that fell flat and used spare parts from it brilliantly, to complete **The Beans of Egypt, Maine**.

There were three major contributing factors to the completion of her first novel. The first was the initial course she took under Ken Rosen where Ken and his students sat around discussing their writings and sundry channels that can lead to successful publication. Publication? Carolyn had not really thought about such a thing. She was still writing as she had done as a little girl in Cape Elizabeth, writing as a way of expressing her powerful inner feelings

—feelings which she was not always certain she really understood herself. But, slowly, from beneath a thin layer of naivete, the wheels within a very intelligent mind began to turn; and Carolyn grasped for the first time that "Perhaps I really do have something worth publishing!"

The second motivating factor was her own poverty and the rage she felt over the loss of her child, a death which she contributed to her own quagmire of poverty. She saw writing for the first time as a ladder upwards and out of impoverishment. "We could have a little farm somewhere," she thought. "Michael could have the junk yard that he has always wanted, and I could have the solitude I so desperately need but have never had here in North Gorham." And so, spurred on by these incentives, she threw all of her high-powered energy into the reshaping of her novel.

The third and final factor was the summer session she attended at the Stone Coast Writers Conference—of which Ken Rosen is the director—held each summer at the University of Southern Maine. The valuable assistance rendered to her by staff

members such as successful New York writer Madison Bell paved the way for the publication of Carolyn's novel.

Although Bell had not seen her novel, he had read some of her short stories. He was impressed—enough to offer the services of his agent in New York. A minor problem arose, however; Carolyn did not have enough money to send her manuscript by certified mail! So Bell loaned her the money in order to get the manuscript into the hands of his agent.

The editor of Viking Press picked up on her novel, but unfortunately he was about to sever his relationship with Viking. "When I get a new job, I'll take it wherever I am," he promised.

As a safety valve, Bell's agent sent Carolyn's manuscript to other publishers. "It's too choppy," "It's too depressing" were typical of the reasons given by editors of other companies for rejecting it.

Nevertheless, the former editor of Viking did locate another position (with Ticknor and Fields of New York) and, true to his word, he negotiated with the agent and Carolyn for the publication of *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*.

One might think that Carolyn would have been ecstatic, but instead she has continued to maintain a wait-and-see attitude. One reason for her lack of display of emotions is that the good news did not burst suddenly upon her.

"It came on so slowly; it was a struggle all the way along. Months would go by at times before I would hear anything further from the agent," she calmly explains.

At this point does Carolyn see her book really beginning to take off?

"I guess so," is her somewhat skeptical response. "I really don't know what to make of it. I am always very cautious. I have learned to be very patient." And then she adds,

"We have *had* to be patient."

The response to *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*—a suitable title to say the least, for there are Beans in every corner of Maine—has been almost overwhelming. Throngs of fans greet her enthusiastically wherever she attends an autograph party. What really pleases her is that her book is being read by loggers and woodsmen (for whom the book was actually written). This is especially gratifying for her in light of the fact that she was told by friends, "Woodsmen don't read books."

"Boy, I am so happy that they were wrong!" she exclaims with her very expressive green eyes giving impetus to her enthusiasm. "I was so afraid that only college people would read it."

The logical question at this point is *Where to, Carolyn Chute?* Her first novel seems destined to be a tremendous success and could remain in print for a long, long time. She also has had a number of short stories and poems published in such periodicals as *Ploughshare*, *Shenandoah*, *Ohio Review*, *Grand Street*, and one of her short stories was selected by novelist Anne Taylor for inclusion



in *The Best American Short Stories*, 1983. These publications, in addition to her novel, should clearly reinforce the thinking of many literary critics that the reading public will be seeing more of Carolyn Chute's work. With the seven thousand dollars she has received thus far from Ticknor and Fields, she and Michael are now almost debt free. If her novel continues to sell, Carolyn hopes to give their house to her daughter and son-in-law and purchase a farm. But, although she and Michael look every bit like good organic farmers, one somehow detects a lack of interest or enthusiasm in maintaining much of a garden. It is more likely that the Chute farm will become an asylum for rejected and unwanted animals that would be given so much freedom to roam about in their newly found haven that a garden would not stand much of a chance.

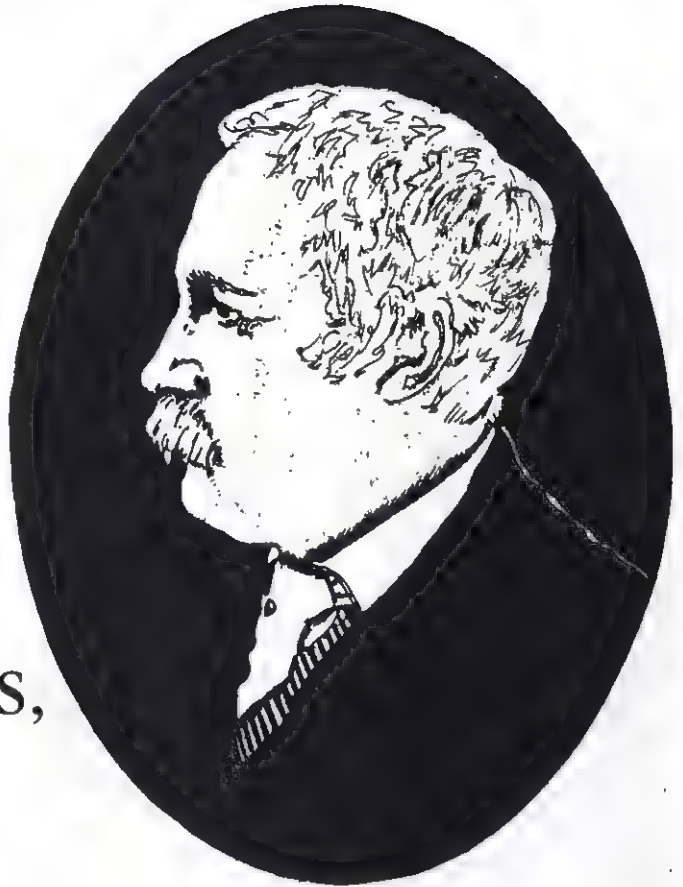
And at this stage, as Carolyn seems to be standing on the very threshold of success undreamed of a year or so ago, she is still thinking about her more unfortunate friends. "They need a helping hand too; I would like to give them a start in life." Carolyn's mother is somewhat dismayed, for she feels that her altruistic daughter will give all that she earns away.

As far as *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* is concerned, it appears destined to be one of those rare good sellers—perhaps even a best seller if it succeeds in transcending geographical barriers. Certainly there is something very universal about poverty. But the vast majority very well may read the book because they will find the promiscuity and earthiness of the Beans humorous and entertaining.

Consequently, if it was Carolyn Chute's intentions when she wrote *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* to win public sympathy for the rural poor, she will, in this writer's opinion, be

Page 48 . . .

Here was a man who had wanted to be a sculptor before he had even seen a statue. There was no art school in Maine in his boyhood but he began to model figures in clay because he could not help it, and from then on no hindrances or obstacles discouraged him. Art was his life. In failing health, under the oppressive heat of Rome, the indomitable spirit that had characterized him from boyhood was still his master.



FRANKLIN SIMMONS, MAINE'S GIFT TO THE WORLD

by Beatrice H. Comas

Each of the Maine towns where Franklin Simmons lived for a time contributed its share toward his future as a world-renowned sculptor who would be decorated three times by the King of Italy—among countless other honors bestowed upon him both at home and abroad.

If talent is inherited, then it was evidently from his mother Dorothy that he received his most characteristic gifts. Those who knew her indicated that she possessed poetic insight, love of art and practical wisdom. His father Loring was also fond of music and was an expert player of the bass viol. He had fewer business qualifications than his two brothers who were successful manufacturers (in Canton, Maine) of scythe rifles then much in use throughout New England.

Franklin was born January 11, 1839, in a part of Lisbon, Maine, that in 1841 would become incorporated as Webster, named for Daniel Webster. By his memora-

ble address in 1820 at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on the 200th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, Webster had won distinction as an orator. Franklin was a descendant in the eighth generation of John and Priscilla (Mullins) Alden. His great-grandfather, Samuel Simmons, then a resident of Cornwall, Connecticut, had a record of five years' service as a Revolutionary War soldier in the Third Connecticut Regiment; he was one of a group of soldiers who at the close of the war established homes on farms in Lisbon (afterward called Webster). Samuel Simmons was also the first schoolmaster in that town.

While Franklin was still an infant, his parents moved to Bath, Maine. Because of the better educational advantages, the change was a favorable one. Very early in life he manifested so much interest in drawing that his mother furnished him with pencils and crayons, and at eleven years of age he began drawing lessons with



*Ulysses S. Grant, marble, 1894.
Commissioned by the Grand Army of the Republic,
it was rejected as being too "informal."*

*Photos Courtesy
Portland
Museum of Art*

Miss Sophia Higgins. Many years later, just a few months before his death, Miss Higgins' sister would visit him at his studio in Rome.

When Franklin was fifteen, the family moved to Lewiston—known for half a century as Lewiston Falls. With the development of manufacturing interests in New England, the falls of the Androscoggin River at this point had attracted capitalists and already the erection of mills had been followed by a large increase in the population. The boy soon obtained a minor position in the office of the Hill Mill.

His intelligence and faithfulness made him a favorite, but he could not forget his primary purpose. Now his interest had turned to sculpture rather than drawing and coloring. He had learned that statues were first modeled in clay and without any instruction he developed his earliest exhibitions of the art. He received so much encouragement that he decided to go to Boston where he saw his first statue, probably Canova's statue of Washington at the State House. On this visit he called on Mr. John Adams Jackson of Bath, Maine, who was known as a sculptor of much promise: he had made a bust of Daniel Webster in 1851 and one of Wendell Phillips in 1854.

After taking some instructions from Jackson, Franklin decided to return to Lewiston. He resigned from his position and opened a small studio in the Waldron Block, where he began to put into practice what he had learned. "The Newsboy" was one of his earliest efforts in modeling from life. This was reproduced in plaster.

Among those from whom he received encouragement was the Rev. George Knox, pastor of the Baptist Church in Lewiston, of which Franklin's mother was a member. He recognized the boy's potential and it was at his suggestion that Franklin saw his need of a classical education to prepare himself for his life's work. He sought assistance from the late Frank Dingley, long time editor of the Lewiston Evening Journal, then but a schoolboy himself, preparing for college at the Lewiston Falls Academy.

Simmons called on Dingley and told him that he wanted to begin the study of Latin. Dingley consented to teach him and this was the beginning of their long friendship. Later Simmons entered the Maine State Seminary at Lewiston which had a collegiate course (and in 1863 became Bates College). One of his art efforts at this period was a portrait of his friend Dingley in oil. Dingley described this as Franklin Simmons' "first and last attempt at oil painting."

Simmons' interest in sculpture was soon stronger than in his books. From Waldron's Block he moved to a larger room in the Central Block and it was probably here that he made a portrait bust of the Rev. Knox which

Promised Land, marble, 1912.



Photos by Benjamin Magro.

showed improvement upon his earlier work. It was perhaps Knox who advised him to call on Dr. Champlin, president of Waterville College (now Colby), who not only gave him a cordial welcome but ordered two portrait busts of himself. One bears the date 1859. When making his will in Rome over half a century later, Mr. Simmons remembered that visit to Colby with a gift of \$1500 to found a scholarship in honor of George Knox. Later Simmons went to Brunswick where, in a studio over the Pejepscot Bank, he made a bust of President Woods and Professor Packard of Bowdoin College.

In 1859 or 1860 he came to Portland and opened a studio on Middle Street. Among the friends he made there were Harrison Brown, landscape and marine painter; John Neal, poet, novelist and journalist; Judge Symonds of the Supreme Court of Maine; and Thomas B. Reed, U.S. Congressman and Speaker of the House.

During the early part of his Portland residence, he seems to have devoted himself largely to cameo medallions of prominent citizens but mention is also made of portrait busts. He received from the Masonic Bodies of Maine an order for a bust in marble of Robert P. Dunlop, Governor of Maine from 1834-1838.

As his outlook broadened, he sensed that in Washington, D.C., places would soon be found for permanent memorials of the heroes of the war. He closed his Portland studio and went to the national capital where he was already known by the Maine Delegation in Con-

gress. He soon had sittings from Generals Grant, Sherman, Meade, Sheridan, Wright, Warren, and Admirals Farragut and Porter. While thus engaged he received his first order for a public war memorial from his former home, Lewiston, Maine. When erected, the statue included a granite base ten feet square on which stood a soldier in bronze of heroic size while bronze tablets on the faces of the base recorded the names of Lewiston's one hundred and twelve officers and soldiers who died in the Civil War.

During his work in Washington, Mr. Simmons received a commission calling for a higher reach of his undeveloped powers. In 1867, at the completion of the extension of the national capital, the House of Representatives abandoned the hall they had previously occupied and took possession of its new hall in the southern wing of the building. At the same time it was suggested that "each state be permitted to send the effigies of two of her chosen sons in marble or bronze to be placed permanently in the old hall." Rhode Island was the first to respond, selecting as her representative Roger Williams, the apostle of religious liberty. The selection of Mr. Simmons for the execution of this statue was at the suggestion of General Grant.

Preparations for the statue were completed and Simmons and his young wife, Emily (Libby) of Auburn, Maine, departed for Italy. In the latter part of 1867, they spent a few months in Florence where John Adams Jackson of Bath, Maine, was now located and from whom

Mr. Simmons obtained helpful information regarding the work on which he was to be engaged. Early in 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Simmons left for Rome. There, amid the inspiring art treasures of many centuries, work on the model of Roger Williams proceeded.

It was cut in marble and reached Washington near the close of 1871. Two other well-known statues of Mr. Simmons belong to this period 1869-1873: "The Mother of Moses" and "The Promised Land." The first was purchased by William S. Appleton of Boston. Mr. and Mrs. Appleton invited a great number of art lovers to meet Mr. Simmons at an exhibition of his statue at their home on Beacon Street.

The years of happiness and fulfillment in Rome were clouded by the death of Mrs. Simmons in 1872. The following year Mr. Simmons came home, going especially to places connected with his boyhood and early manhood. It was at this time that he received an order from the city of Auburn for a statue of Edward Little, the founder of the old Lewiston Falls Academy (which later became Edward Little High School).

When Mr. Simmons returned again to the United States in 1877, he brought with him two marble busts of John B. Brown, prominently identified with the business interests of Portland. During his presence here, he also completed a statue of William King, the first governor of Maine.

One of his best known statues is that of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Funds for its erection came from all parts of the world, largely from American school children. On September 24, 1885, it was placed on its pedestal in Longfellow Square. At the unveiling ceremony four days later, Portland schoolchildren sang the poet's "Psalm of Life."

The Memorial to Portland's sailors and soldiers who died in the Civil War is another work by Franklin

Simmons. Its erection was delayed by differences of opinion regarding the location, finally settled in favor of a monument in Market Square, now known as Monument Square. It was dedicated October 28, 1891.

Happy years followed for the sculptor. In 1892, he married Baroness Ernst von Jeinsen, a native of Providence, Rhode Island. Her husband, a German nobleman, had died a few years after their marriage. More and more visitors to Rome were finding their way to Mr. Simmons' studio in the Via San Nicolo Tolentino.

By the time Mr. Simmons was 67 years old, he had been living in Rome for thirty years. His few visits to the United States were chiefly in connection with his studio work. The second Mrs. Simmons had died and he began to think about an art museum for Portland. On March 10, 1907, he wrote to Judge Symonds in Portland, "I am willing to give \$50,000 toward it when I die."

In 1909 he was reunited with his old Portland friend, "Harry" Brown, then living in London; and the remainder of the year he spent in visits among friends between Maine and Washington. While in Maine, he searched for whatever would be helpful to him in making a statue of Commodore Preble.



He returned to Rome in 1910 to work on his statues "Hercules" and "Alcestis," and was still working at this task by 1913. He had not been well and would have liked to leave the heat of the summer to come back home but felt that he couldn't leave until his "Hercules" was done. By the time he had finished, his strength was exhausted and he died in Rome December 6, 1913. He was buried in the American Cemetery where his two wives lay. On their graves he had erected a replica of his "Angel of the Resurrection."

A copy of Mr. Simmons' will eventually reached this country. After bequests to family and friends, he left the balance of his property to the city of Portland; however, objections were made by relatives who claimed the will was not executed according to law in that there was no day of the month mentioned in the date on the will. As a result of a hearing a compromise was arranged between the estate and the contestants. The sum of \$25,000 was paid to the latter and the residue of the estate, amounting to a little over \$45,000, with statuary works appraised at \$11,800, was given to the city of Portland.

Here was a man who had wanted to be a sculptor before he had even seen a statue. There was no art school in Maine in his boyhood but he began to model figures in clay because he could not help it, and from then on no hindrances or obstacles discouraged him. Art was his life. In failing health, under the oppressive heat of Rome, the indomitable spirit that had characterized him from boyhood was still his master.

Shortly before his death, he wrote in a letter to a friend: "So long as my Maine friends live I can let the rest of the world go by." What finer tribute could this famous man pay to the State that was honored to give him birth?

Last month this piece of fiction met the gremlins of the print shop. As a result, it was a little hard to read. To do justice to a fine story, we are reprinting it, corrected:

OLD MAN'S JOURNEY

Fiction by Stewart Goodwin

Nurses and aides at Pleasant Manor agreed they'd rarely felt such attachment to a resident. In appearance, Andrew McLafferty was not much different from the other old men—thin, unruly gray hair; wrinkled and weather-worn skin resulting from his years at sea or on the farm. Uncomplaining and soft-spoken, prized qualities at the Manor, most of his hours were spent gazing into some obscure world of his own, slumped forward in his chair with his bony hands propped on his cane. Other residents, the few who spoke more than the continuous chant of "I wanta go home!" or "Won't somebody please help me?", trying to converse with Andrew, were often politely but firmly rebuffed. Yet, he loved to entertain youngsters who might drift in with lurid sealore; it was as if they alone, bright-eyed mates, could understand without skepticism his tales of adventure and peril.

Once in a while he would arise, standing erect as a mast, and parade down the long corridor to peer out the windows of the south door. On those grand occasions, observed with tender amusement by the staff, one of the nurses would announce, "Clear the way, folks. Here comes the fleet!"

They did not know where he had come from or where he had been. According to the accepted story, years ago the director received a call from a distant relative of Andrew's

saying a man lay destitute and broken, his family gone or dead, on an old farm in the hills....

For his part, he felt trapped, constantly at bay and penned in, unable to fulfill the urgency of his dreams. From the edge of his bed, cane between his knees, he watched the white-clad figures fussing around him.

"How are you doing this morning, Andrew?" one of them asked, pausing barely long enough for him to sight in. "It's a pretty good day," she said, "but awful cold. It'll snow before long."

Snow? Why, he thought, it can't snow, not in early June....

The other girl began to shake out his pillow. "Mr. McLafferty. My son just *adores* those stories you tell about the war. He wanted me to ask if he could see you again sometime. Would you mind?" She patted the pillow into place and looked across the bed at her companion. "Mr. McLafferty was quite a hero in the war. On a ship. What was the name of that ship, Mr. McLafferty?" Without waiting for a reply, she added, "Sunk right underneath him, they say."

"No!" he protested suddenly, breaking from his reverie. "No, no it didn't!" He extended the cane and rapped it emphatically against the tiles. "Didn't sink, either! She fought a helluva fight, she did, but never sank! *Yorktown* couldn't sink...!"

"That's it, yes." She didn't look at him as she went on flitting about like an aggressive wasp. "*Yorktown*. Out around Hawaya somewhere, wasn't it? When *was* that, anyway, Mr. McLafferty?" she asked over her shoulder. She was down on one knee fooling with a handle under the bed.

He felt the mistiness form around his eyes. Certain familiar scenes of swirling waters and wild upheavals began to appear before him.

"Forty-two, it was," he murmured, sure of that as he was his name. "First part a June...."

"Imagine that!" clucked the other girl. "That's over forty years ago, 'n just look at Mr. McLafferty. Who'd ever think he was that old?"

"He says he was a commodore," stated her friend, "whatever that is."

Whether they remained or left he could not tell. With little consciousness of his actions, he stood up and pushed down hard on his cane to ascertain his balance. He set off for the doors at the south end, from where he could look toward the sea.

He saw himself on the flight deck. *Above, before the storm, calm blue sky free of traffic. Where in the world were their fighters? It would be a race, he knew, between the Japanese attackers and their own planes returning from sorties against the enemy carriers. He felt tight, coiled inside, ready to spring loose at the right moment. He and a few of the men stood smoking, nervously wise-*



cracking, waiting in the cool spray....

He continued looking in the direction of the town and the sea beyond. The Yorktown's flight deck dissolved into a green field and two grazing horses. Off that way was the sea, his ship, his dear valiant mates....

Starting, he swung his head around; tiny, buzzing dark specks came into view. They grew larger, the insect-hum becoming a metallic, rough drone. He sighted through his binoculars, but before he could focus, the alarms sounded and the ship seemed to lurch in the sea as two thousand men went into action. How many planes? A dozen, fifteen. They hovered like gulls, then suddenly flipped about on their backs and pitched straight down, birds diving for prey, the deep rumble turning to a high, screeching whine. In spite of the clamor, he thought they were safe. The Jap dive bombers had proved laughably inept....

He clasped the railing of the glass door for support. His mouth hung open as again he envisioned the horror...

The banshee plane homed in on him; it would plummet to the deck, smearing him beneath it. Gunners from around him and above him fired a screen of metal at the plunging craft until it puffed into a fireball of great heat. A large object released from the plane hurtled toward the deck and the island structure at once sagged inward, buckling, rocked by the bomb. Officers leaped and scram-

bled from the bridge; he lost his balance and careened down the oily deck, coming to rest against the island.

He raised his arm over his eyes to fend off another Jap plane diving toward the ship. It skipped off the rigging and bullseyed into an open elevator. The world quaked as the disintegrating plane disembowelled the ship....

It became apparent that he had a duty to perform. His place was with his ship, with his men, in such a time of trouble, not with these silly women and drooling old people gaping into their graves. He stared beyond the window and the field to the sea. Down that road lay a little harbor town, he knew, from which he could procure a ship, a little boat at least, and make his way to the Pacific, to the Yorktown, to the men he'd somehow forsaken....

He also knew he must keep his intentions to himself, saying not one word to those flighty girls who always seemed lurking about. For in their way, whether innocently or with full knowledge, restrictive to men of action like himself, they would become obstacles and might tend to divert him from his goal.

For several days of that autumn which Andrew McLafferty thought to be spring, he brooded, plotting the chart for his journey down to the sea. The sea had been his life, his obsession—though he dimly recalled an interval of time during which he

too, like most of the residents of Pleasant Manor, had worked the mean soil of Maine. Some things *did* seem so confusing to him. No matter—it was not important; all that concerned him, looming ever larger in his newly-stoked mind from day to day, was getting to the *Yorktown* and helping in its death-struggle with the little yellow bastards.

One night as he lay imagining the event of his leaving the place where they had imprisoned him, he overheard two of the ghostly figures around his bed.

"Well, now he's asleep, thank God," said one. "Poor Andrew's acted so weird these last few days. He doesn't talk, won't even answer simple questions. Just stares at the walls. I'm afraid he's slipping, poor old guy."

"At seventy-eight he has a right to slip, I guess. I hate to see it, too. He's a dear old man."

"Thoroughly withdrawn himself. Seems to be thinking, 'Hell with 'em. I'll shut 'em out of my mind and live with memories.'"

Leaving, they closed the door gently.

He was on his back, his arms straight and stiff along his sides. They are well-meaning children, he thought, but children nevertheless, and they could not be expected to fathom the import of his mission. Yet they apparently observed what they deemed a change in his manner and, thus alerted, might tie him to the bed. He fumbled with the restraining bar until he had it lowered, got up and turned on the light, and put on his warm flannel shirt and old trousers. Having gathered the few things he needed into a small bedroll, he flipped off the light, opened the door a crack, and gazed up and down the corridor. If he were to open the south door at the end of the hall away from the nurses' station, he wondered, would it trigger

some sort of alarm? He slid into his comfortable slippers and took his coat from the closet. Removing a blanket from his bed, he wrapped it around his coat and bedroll and headed for the lobby.

"Why, Andrew," said the nurse on duty, "just where do you suppose you're going? Good Lord, it's eleven o'clock."

"Got my blanket, see," he said, lifting it slightly in the crook of his right arm, "and thought I'd sit awhile out here. Can't seem to sleep much."

"Oh, all right," she shrugged, apparently satisfied. "Holler if you need anything."

The dayroom was dark and vacant. At the far end was a door leading to a hallway at right angles to the corridor he had just come down. Out that door and to the right, he knew, was the front entrance to the Manor. He sat for a few minutes, gathering his will and testing to see if the nurse would look in. In a while she appeared at the doorway near her desk and asked if he were all right. As she turned her back, he scurried out the door and into the hall.

He paused by the glass door and squinted into the darkness beyond the dazzle of the front floodlights. No movement attracted his attention; again he summoned his resolve, sighed, and slipped out into the world. A nip in the air caught him short, and it came to him that any chance observer would be seeing him in the temporary guise of a fragile, forlorn man.

He carried the bedroll pressed awkwardly between his right arm and side, probing his way along with the cane in his left hand. Down the entry road toward the still highway he clattered, cane and footfalls snapping in the chill night. It did not worry him that he might seem a thing of curiosity to passersby. Getting to the harbor, however great the distance might prove to be, was

his only care—to the port, then to the ship and his beleaguered men.

The roadside was level enough, though layered with loose, annoying gravel on which he slid and skated. He forged along, step by step, reaching ahead with the cane and moving up, reaching and moving, on and on. The intensity of his aim negated any hardship and made him stalwart.

To occupy his thoughts as he proceeded, he could not say to what extent voluntarily, that one great scene of his life ran like a film through his mind. Again he lived the action on the *Yorktown's* deck: the attack; the shock of the monstrous, rentng explosions; the glimpses of hell caught in the crippled, bloodied men screaming, pleas for aid or death in their crazed, unnatural eyes.

"Hold on, boys, I'm comin'!" he cried aloud, nearly in cadence with his steps. "Don'tcha lose hope now—we'll get the bastards yet! I'm comin', I'm comin'," came the refrain again and again.

Several times piercing lights bore down upon him and he cowered, turning aside and upraising his forearm. As the lights veered past he would cry, "Missed that time! Right into the goddamn sea with ya!" He would glance back with a jerky, unseeing twitch. "Gunners, get those mounts adjusted!" he yelled once into the uncaring darkness, "and

someone see that oil's swabbed up over there!"

Once what seemed a wavering siren accelerated toward him from behind, seizing at his heart and nearly tearing it from his chest. He stumbled to his left and bumped a solid object he took for an edge of the superstructure. Cringing, he waited until the blare diminished, fading into the distance. "Sons a bitches coming from everywhere...!" he cursed, his fist aloft in defiance.

He shifted the bedroll to his left arm and took the cane in his right hand. Stiffness, a profound general weariness began to grip him, though it was as yet no matter for conscious reflection. He would be sore tomorrow, he knew, though a man in his sharp condition should feel no lasting effects from such a journey.

A rust-hinged door in his brain swung partly ajar and a nagging thing stirred within. If I am on the ship, how can I be *here*? he asked himself, though unable to define what the "here" represented or exactly where he was. In time his doubt, the concern with the unreality of existing in two times and places at once, vanished, and he became again strictly a ship's officer in the midst of a glorious ordeal.

Yet, before that mental aperture through which had wriggled a momentary sting could be slammed

Page 48 . . .

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Mr. and Mrs. Winfield Crowley

Top right, farmers delivering their milk in 80 lb. cans in the late 1920's. Except for the weekly tank truck deliveries, little has changed today.

Very little has changed at the Crowley Cheese factory of Healdville, Vermont. The making of cheese is done as it was 148 years ago when the factory first began in the kitchen of Winfield Crowley.

The work is all done manually; and absolutely no additives, preservatives, artificial coloring, or flavor enhancers are used—just the way founder Crowley decreed.

Crowley had standards. Farmers were to follow his demands or else! For instance, his Article 9 of the by-laws to the farmers reads: *"Milk shall not be diluted with water or other substance or any cream taken from it or any milk dipped from a can standing over night, under penalty of forfeiting all the milk delivered by the patron found guilty of so doing, and expelling said patron from the Factory and giving public exposure and prosecution..."*

Farmers obeyed.

It was in their best interest. The cheese factory gave them an outlet. Plus this was a cooperative venture—everyone agreed and signed a constitution for a "...cheese making association." Crowley had submitted a proposal that was adopted by the farmers..."to accept the offer of A. W. Crowley to make cheese and deliver it at the railway depot for \$1.50 per cwt (one hundred pounds) for plain and \$2.00 for sage."

Today, the Crowley Cheese factory, from outside appearances, is not at all impressive. The building does qualify to be called "quaint."



*Photo
Doug Alderson*

NESTS

C. Randall Daniels

Violent shaking, branches quaking
Gravity the last leaves taking

Bare branches 'gainst the gray sky
left from winter when things die

Broken twigs, intertwined
bits of string, downy lined

Perched on forked branches
Deserted nest in the wind dances

Forlorn, empty, simple, rude
once home to a feathery brood

Last year, it was a bustling home
now it hangs, quiet, alone

Soon limbs will be abloom
winter's not a permanent doom

March is here new life to bring
soon from the nest, birds will sing.

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BOOKKEEPING & TAX PREPARATION

Looking For Four-Leaf Clover

Spring traipsed across my meadow and left her emerald footprints everywhere. This vernal growth and a warming breeze beckoned me to the field. Among the wildings, I noticed a tri-leafed clover growing there. Idly, I began to search for a little Irish luck among this clover of spring.

This small legume was low hop clover which has naturalized throughout the Southeast. The plant stays very low to the ground — perhaps giving rise to its common name. In late spring the meadow is a-buzz with honeyed-flight as the tiny yellow flowers are frequented by my bees.

As my hands and knees ambled across the ground, I saw no four-leaf omens of good luck — only leaflets in three. The search was slowed by the tiny leaves of the hop clover which usually flourishes in areas of poor soil. I was not deterred by this miniature clover. The family record of thirteen lucky clovers plucked in one day spurred me on. What I needed was *bigger* leaves to examine.

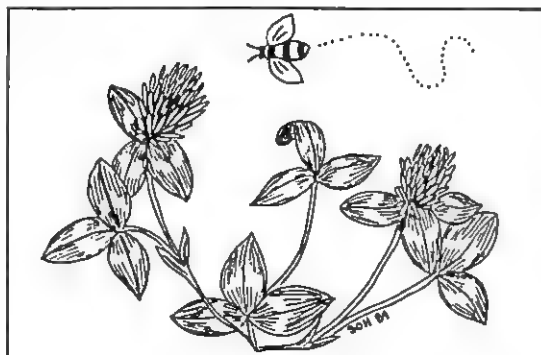
A roadside attraction of North Florida offered a new clover variety for my inspection. The highways near home are flanked with crimson clover seeded many years ago by the Department of Transportation. The

clover has volunteered each year since and in late spring will bring a scarlet flush to the roadway as the clover blooms profusely.

It was the verdant foliage that interested me now. So I quickly hunkered down to check the leaves. But a "duck walk" down the right of way uncovered no quadruplets.

On a shopping trip, I discovered four-leaf clovers neatly sealed in plastic and shipped from California. I was tempted to call a halt to my search and buy one. But could I actually buy good fortune? Surely, part of the luck was in finding and picking my own clover.

Maybe I wasn't looking at the right kind of clover. David Wright, an extension agronomist with the University of Florida, assured me that the four-leaf aberration is common in ALL



RED CLOVER PUNCH

Red clover is a traditional spring tonic — and delicious in this updated springtime punch. Red clover actually has flowers of a light lavender and should not be confused with crimson clover which has brilliant scarlet flowers. Only harvest clover flowers if you are familiar with their growing conditions — and never from roadsides that may contain toxins from automobile fumes or herbicides.

Pour four cups of boiling water over two tablespoons of dried red clover blossoms (double this amount if using fresh blossoms). Steep for five minutes. Strain. Mix with four cups of apple juice. Serve chilled with lemon slices. Makes two quarts of punch.

varieties of clover. Therefore, I decided that a wide expanse of clover might improve my luck.

Fred Kurtz, a farmer in Gadsden County, opened to my hunt fifty acres of crimson and arrowleaf clover interplanted with bahia grass. The delicate red and light green markings characteristic of the arrowleaf clover attracted my attention. The crimson clover's simple green leaflets seemed plain by comparison. But Fred assured me that the crimson would reach its glory in mid-April.

As we walked across the fields, I was treated to four-leaf clover tales as Fred recounted picking hundreds of lucky clovers over the years and even finding one clover plant that sported all quadruple leaflets. My children eagerly picked all manner of winter annuals — Carolina geranium, henbit, chickweed — in the certainty that they surely had a four, five or six-leaf clover!

Even without a four-leaf prize, the clover quest had its rewards — beautiful days under a warming sun and quiet moments in the spring greenery. Perhaps my luck was in these memories to savor. On my front porch, I toasted spring with a glass of red clover punch.

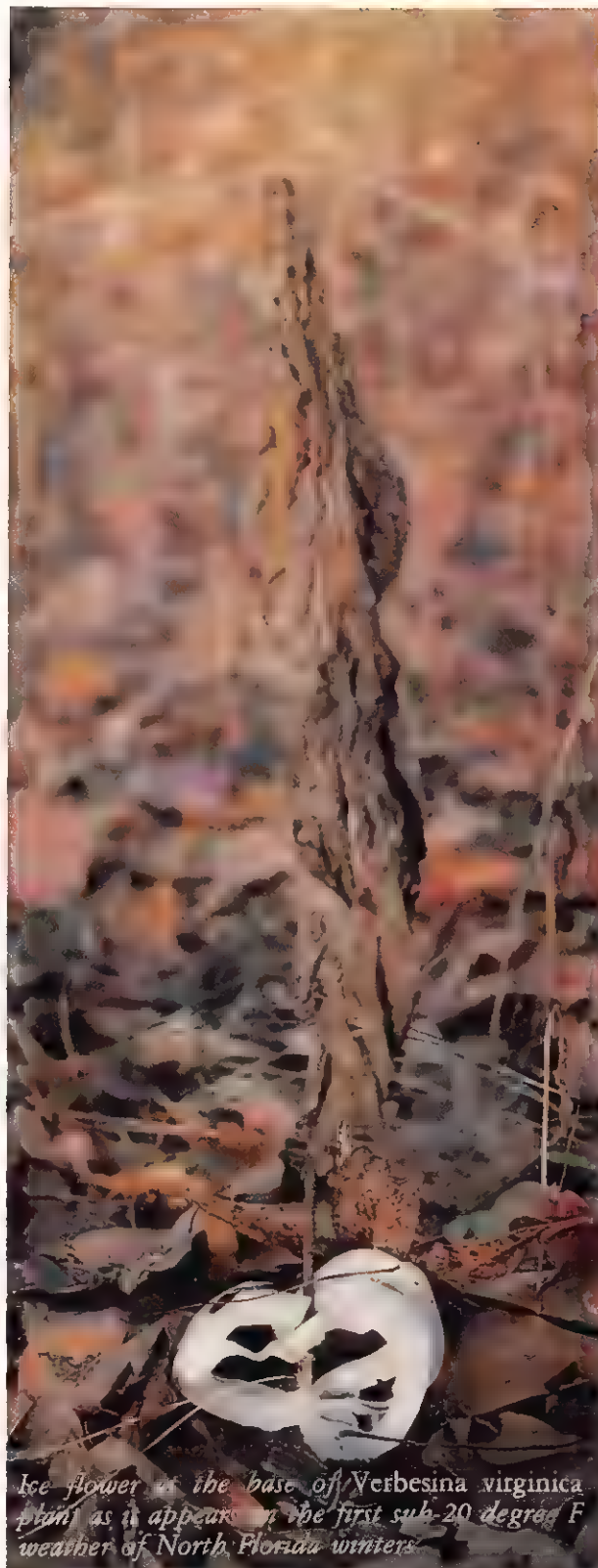
One way this could happen would be the production of plant antifreeze. The water stored in the large roots contains stored nutrients that are also electrolytes (starches, sugars, mineral salts, amino acids, and the like). The larger and spongier the roots, the more stored nutrients, which assists the plant to produce vigorous new growth and to reproduce in the following growing season. As sap is forced upward into the stem during freezing weather, only the water freezes and exits into the cold night air as a growing ice formation. The electrolytes, left behind, increase in concentration, lower the freezing point of the remaining sap, and thus protect the shallow roots from lethal freezing. Ice flowers, then, if this scenario were true, would be only artistic artifacts — mere frozen byproducts — of a more sublime process in the survival of a real flower.

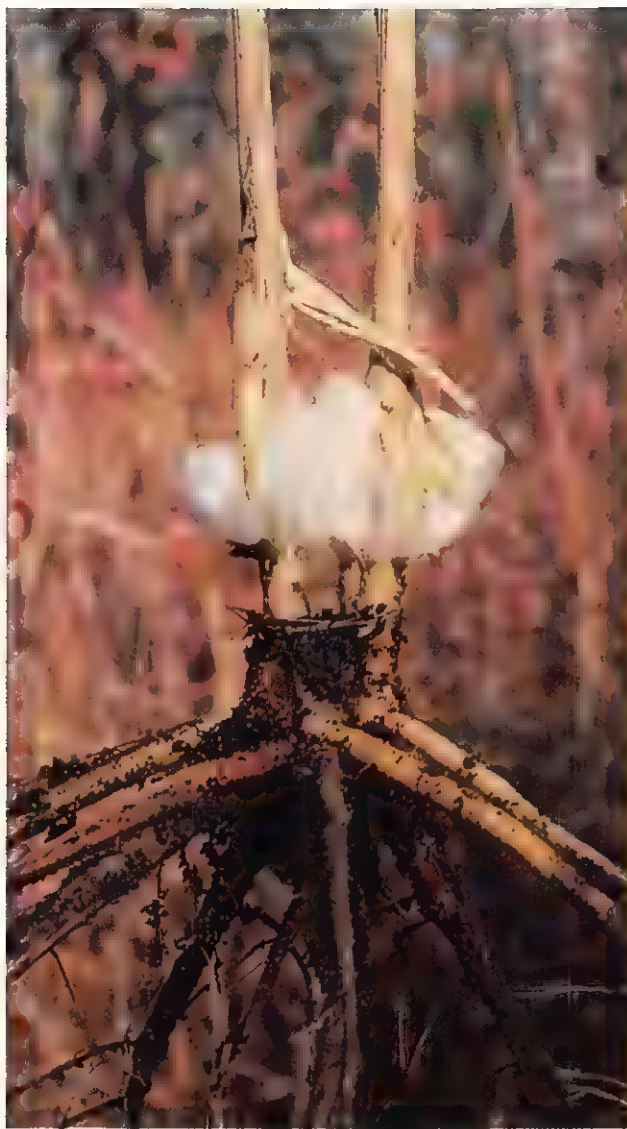
I can't tell you more than this, for I have not investigated the phenomenon further nor found any scientific literature on it.

Although cold and lifeless themselves, ice flowers warmly remind me that the beauty of the organic world is derived partly from the innate beauty of the organic world. It required eight years for my mind to finally "see" these fancy fringes for something more than just frost. I wonder what other miracles I'm overlooking every day?

Armed with these insights, I became curious. Why was the flat-seed sunflower the only plant in the woods that produced ice flowers? Where did all the water come from in their sometimes grapefruit-sized globes? The roots? . . . the stem? . . . the soil?

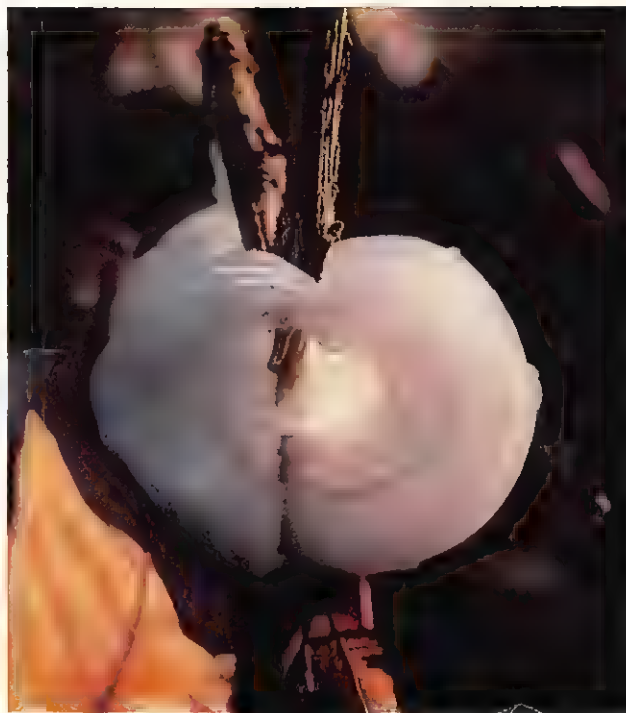
I spent one morning pulling up all the similar-sized woody perennials in my woodland ice garden and found an answer. Of all the species I examined, only flat-seed sunflowers had thick, fleshy-fibrous roots, large enough to serve as a storage organ for all the water of an ice flower. There, at least, could be the source of the water, but how did it move up the stem and emerge at the base of the plant on cold mornings? I transplanted six sunflower plants to my home garden and six more in buckets of water so that the water level ended on the stem where the soil normally terminates. I grew beautiful ice flowers in both experiments.





I had two highly correlated facts. Ice flowers seem to form only on plants of the flat-seed sunflower, and this plant suspiciously is the only one with fleshy-fibrous roots. Maybe this reflects cause and effect.

Most nutrients in soil are found near the surface, so that plants whose roots are confined to this zone are benefitted. But in temperate climates, shallow roots are subject to lethal freezing, an obvious detriment to survival. Is it possible then, that ice flowers somehow assist the flat-seed sunflower to exploit the nutrient-rich shallow soil zone by somehow safeguarding it against lethal freezing?



Without the skirt-lifting effect of the bark, later freezes sometimes look like toothpaste. . .



. . . or "camellias" . . .

This is the second in a series

Ice Flowers

Nature Blooms in Winter

by D. Bruce Means

My whole family enjoyed the thrill of discovery one cold Christmas morning as all five of us enthusiastically darted about in a frozen woodland looking for ice flowers. These exquisitely delicate works of natural ice sculpture lasted only a few hours that morning, but we lost no time learning everything we could about them before they vanished. Later in the winter a couple more cold spells triggered other "blooms" and presented us with additional opportunities to appreciate their beauty and learn even more. As we ran from one bloom to the other, it soon became apparent that ice "flowers" grew out of the bases of the flat-seed Sunflower (*Verbesina virginica*). Such an association immediately sparks the question, "What are Ice Flowers?"

Upon close inspection we could see that the "petals" seemed to have been squeezed through the dead stems. Apparently the leading edge of the emerging ice freezes to the thin, but tough, bark of the stems, and as the ice grows it is lifted upward by the attached bark, forming delicate, lacy, and curvy ribbons of ice. Ice formations normally are angular because of the

crystalline nature of ice, but the exotic petals of ice flowers are broad, flowing loops. This may actually be governed by flowing water emerging at different rates between the tops and bottoms of petals. The clinging bark creates an upward torque at the zone of freezing, allowing more water to escape, and freeze, at the bottom of each petal.

During later freezes in the same winter we found that ice flowers produced by the same plants took on entirely different shapes, often looking more like true flowers. This resulted because the bark of the woody stems already had been peeled upward by the first freeze and was unavailable to influence later ice growth. Also, once the vascular bundles of the plants has been broken apart by the first flowers, their sculpting effect on emerging water was not so delicate. Later ice flowers were more compact.

I suppose water either is squeezed upward by the freezing ground, or it is drawn upward by some sort of suction as the ice petals emerge from the stem, or both. I had a rough idea now how ice flowers were formed, but no idea why.





All the world is dancing
On winter's back they're
prancing

The dance of March goes
on and on
and we are all part of
her song

March is here, winter is gone
we are the dance and we
are the song

Photo by Susan Brosnan



MARCH DANCE

Cumulus, cirrus, thunderheads too
clouds are dancing, how 'bout you?

Rhythmic rains keep the paces
leaves dancing in their places

In the trees, the wildwind fiddles
lightning cracks and thunder riddles

March is dancing to a morris tune
Flowers bobbing in full bloom

A Poem by Sakim



With sabres of sunlight, winds take a fling
and do-si-do with birds on the wing

Wind blown grasses promenade
rainbows dance in masquerade

Kites bobbing, dragging strings
Paper birds without wings

Moonbeam, sunbeam both play about
one dances in and the other bows out



Photos by Sakim

WAKULLA SPRINGS LODGE

QUEEN OF THE FOREST

by Sakim

If ever a queen reigned over the luxurious Southern forest, it is the gracious Wakulla Lodge. Built in the 1930's as a replacement for an older wooden structure, the stately masonry and tile dame rules with a grace that speaks of bygone eras.

Kings, queens, princesses, dukes, and lords have walked her halls. But most footsteps that have echoed down her marbled corridors have been made by people like you and me. For all of her excellent appointments, exquisite foods, and old Persian carpets, the Lodge belongs truly to the people.

Glancing upwards in the great lobby of the Wakulla Lodge creates a breathtaking experience.

Magnificent cypress beams span vast spaces, catching and reflecting the natural light into the lobby and onto the glass veranda. Tens of thousands of brushstrokes create a vibrant painted ceiling. Folk motifs surround the cornices and coats-of-arms claim distinguished places in the center of the lofty beams. Painted by refugees from war-torn Germany, the motif blended old world art and technique with new world expression by capturing river scenes, animals, forests and fountains in a mural on high.

Perched on limestone bedrock, overlooking the world's deepest and largest freshwater spring, the Wakulla Lodge reigns quiet and supreme.





“GOD’S CORNER” A WORD FROM THE LORD — FAITH (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Faith is a broad subject throughout the word of God. Next to Love it is perhaps the most famous of the three sister Graces mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13: Faith, Hope and Love.

Faith is the spiritual eye that sees the impossible being accomplished in our lives. Faith says, “nothing is too hard for God.” Jesus said, “. . . with God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27). If God were stunted in might and had a limit to His strength, we could well despair. But seeing that He is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue, no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, and no misery too deep for Him to relieve.

Faith is essential to obtaining eternal life: “For by grace are you saved through faith, and not of yourselves,

it is the gift of God — not of works, lest any many should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

As described by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1). As we continue reading Hebrews 11, we discover Faith to be a word of action. Faith is not a muted witness, but a vigorous, spirited testimony of benefits provided by our Lord in the giving of Himself for man. (Read Psalms 103:1-5).

Faith is a gift from the Father to the believer who will simply act upon His word in allowing Him to accomplish in our lives His will and purpose.

Nowhere do we read that Faith explains God or His ways, or that Faith will permit us to see God in this life. “But without Faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to

God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

While we do not see God with our physical eyes or understand His ways, Faith does not lead us blindly, but accurately, in simple trust in Him. God always has our best interest at heart. Whether it is on the mountain top of refreshing experiences of His glory, or in the dry desert not feeling His presences, or on rough seas whose turbulent waves threaten and endanger — we know, because of Faith, He is watching and caring for us.

Prayer: Lord grant that we may be enriched with the gift of Faith, as we surrender ourselves into your hands. In so doing, may we become instruments of action. Amen.

*Rev. Alvin R. Hancock
Tallahassee, FL*

DARK NIGHT AURA

Hey Pinetree,
I saw you
last night dancing.
The wind ran
away in
gay profusion.
Sweet music
blew across
the cloudy moon.
I wove with
shadows of
tall trees prancing,
Their needles
colliding
in confusion.
Hidden stars
caught upon
a flying loon.

*Linda Gail Brown
Chattahoochee*



DUNES

Wind Blown Sugar
Facing Relentlessly
Out To Sea
Dunes!

Richard W. Smith, Tallahassee



Irish in North Florida

*by Mary Louise Ellis
& William Warren Rogers*

The new green surroundings matched the dominant color of their homeland. For the twelve Irish settlers living in Leon County during the mid 1800's, St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1860, was a time to celebrate and a time to remember.

Driven by the thousands from their Irish homeland earlier that century because of famine and religious harassment, at least a dozen of the immigrants ended up in North Florida.

Leon County, then considered one of the most prosperous areas of the state, boasted a population of more than 12,000. As the state capital, Tallahassee served as an agricultural, political and cultural center to the rest of the state during that time.

When the Irish immigrants arrived in Leon County, most of the city's population consisted of Indians, although there was a smattering of French and West Indies residents as well. Through business, religious or social interaction, the Irish were soon acquainted with their neighbors and began to adapt themselves to their new home.

Located in an overwhelmingly Protestant area, the Irish became part of a small congregation that attended services at Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Tallahassee, more often called the Church of St. Mary, completed in 1854. Most of the Irish settlers arriving in North Florida were relatively young, although Isabel Pearce made the trip when she was

eighty years old. Many of the new settlers held labor-related jobs, but a few had occupations such as merchant and tailor.

Having acquired the label "Floridians," the transplanted Irish settlers often wore homemade shamrocks to retain their homeland heritage. Saint Patrick's Day, named for the patron saint responsible for bringing Christianity to the Emerald Isle during 432 A.D., was a special time celebrated by the early Irish in North Florida. On reflection, the Irish immigrants realized they were a long way from Tipperary. Yet, the luck traditionally ascribed to the Irish followed them to their enclave in the South. Without exception, the Irish considered themselves lucky.



Superstitious captains associate a black bag with all alligator hides . . . so don't expect to hitch a ride on a superstitious captain's boat with one.

Many fishing superstitions are based in nature. For example, many fishermen believe if they dream of clear water that the dawn will bring them luck and good fishing. A dream of muddy water will not.

A whippoorwill singing at night is believed to bring good fishing.

A bird landing on a boat at sea was thought to be a sign of good luck.

Atmospheric conditions were the basis for a number of fishing superstitions. Here are a few:

A red sky at morning meant sailor take warning.

A red sunset meant heavy wind the following day.

A circle around the sun or moon meant bad weather. The number of stars visible within that ring meant the number of days the bad weather would continue.

Of all the superstitions kicking around the wharfs of tiny fishing villages, George comes closest to believing the cockleshell curse.

During the early 1900's, many families gathered cockleshells to top the dirt graves of their kin. This stopped rainfall erosion and made a grave cover. To take the shells from their resting place on the beach was to risk bad luck. As a young man, George fished from a boat where a crewman brought aboard a sack of cockleshells. The boat burned at the

dock upon their return to shore.

After three weeks of repair and refitting, George and the crew prepared to fish the boat again, only to have the same crewmate gather more shells for the grave and bring them aboard the boat a second time.

During the second fishing trip, the boat worked loose from its anchor, washed into the shoreline breakers and overturned, losing all the fish and gear. Superstitions or not, George has never allowed cockleshells aboard his boats.

But, if you ask him, luck, superstition or intuition has very little to do with the success. Management skills, strong family ties and faith in God helped make Captain George the luckiest fisherman in Apalachicola.

FISHERMAN'S LUCK

by Cindy Whaley

They used to call George Kirvin the luckiest fisherman in Apalachicola.

For more than 40 years, this 75-year-old North Florida native owned one of the most productive seafood processing plants in Franklin County. He was also among the top fishing boat captains in the Panhandle.

Many early fishermen relied on luck, intuition and superstition. Captain George never held much stock in all that. He attributed his good fortune to good management and planning skills.

According to George, most fishermen thought it bad luck if an animal deliberately jumped overboard while the vessel was underway. Some captains took the superstition so seriously they would turn the boat around and head for shore.

George said he unwittingly tested this superstition, when he and a crewmate allowed a stubborn cat to stay aboard their boat. Neither the cat's voyage nor the fishing trip were particularly successful. George said the cat stayed aboard the boat until the two men were almost through the Gulf channel near Apalachicola. Then the cat jumped ship. Trouble soon followed! A fog settled quickly. For several days they were stranded in the Gulf. Waves started building around their small boat. The two men headed to shore. The men, however, missed the channel leading to safety and landed on a shallow shoal. Battered, beaten and cold, they survived, but never forgave the cat!

Another popular superstition still held by fishermen involves alligators. You can't talk about them, or, heaven forbid, you can't bring one aboard. George isn't sure why fishermen believe alligators bring bad luck, but he knew one fisherman who quit fishing for several months because he heard someone utter the word alligator on his boat.



photos by Robert Lagerstrom

Bitter Sweet South

Contents

- 4** Fisherman's Luck
photos by Robert Lagerstrom
- 6** Irish in North Florida
by Mary Louise Ellis and William Warren Rogers
- 7** Poetry and Photographs
- 8** "God's Corner" A Word from the Lord—Faith
Rev. Alvin R. Hancock
- 9** Wakulla Springs Lodge
by Sakim
- 10** March Dance
by Sakim
- 12** Nature Blooms in Winter: Ice Flowers
by D. Bruce Means
- 15** Four Leaf Clover
- 16** Nests by C. Randall Daniels
- 17** The Great Dixie Blizzard
by Dick Mitchell
- 18** Southern Cookin'
- 19** What's Happenin'

Cover photo: The Greens of March, by Doug Alderson, Tallahassee, FL.

Editor's Page

Hi, my name is Cindy Whaley and beginning with this issue, I am joining the *BitterSweet South* staff as managing editor. I'm excited about the opportunity to help bring you a quality magazine for this region and I hope you enjoy reading each issue as much as we at *BitterSweet South* enjoy bringing it to you.

Each month we'll be traveling some of the prettiest Florida, Georgia and Alabama backroads meeting people, visiting places and learning more about their lifestyle.

This month in *BitterSweet South*, we're focusing on the many faces of March, from her blustery days to her luck-filled legends. You're going to see beautiful photography by local artists who have captured the green of March. You'll chuckle at Susan O'Halloran's short story as she searches for the elusive four-leafed clover and you'll smile as you read a sprightly March poem by Sakim.

As in every issue of *BitterSweet South*, we're writing to reach you who are interested in a more relaxed lifestyle. What would you like to read in *BitterSweet South*? Let us know.

Please submit short articles, photography, inspirational thoughts, "homemade" recipes, and homespun tales of people, places and lifestyles for our summer and fall seasons. Help us make this your magazine.

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We are looking forward to getting acquainted with you.

Elaine Dougherty
Publisher

Faye Dailey
Editor-in-Chief

Susan Whittle
Consulting Editor

Cindy Whaley
Managing Editor

Charles M. Kesting
Marketing Manager

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Susan Brosnan, Tallahassee



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March, 1985



The Greens of March

THE FLAVOR OF RURAL SOUTHERN LIVING



Checking the cheese



Working the curd



Farmers drawing off whey



At lower right is Mr. Randolph Smith, present owner of Crowley Cheese.

Randolph made an analogy. "Our cheese is homemade. It's like the difference between homemade bread and store-bought bread. The texture, flavor, and substance of hand processed cheese is simply more distinctive."

Others agree. Letters from such notables as former President Dwight Eisenhower and Supreme Court Justice Harlan F. Stone ordering more cheese or exclaiming its virtues are thumbtacked to a post.

This compact and undistinguished operation of five employees produces

about 50 tons of cheese yearly—which are shipped to such places as Russia, Kenya, Australia, even Peking, and throughout North America.

Not too long ago, the Crowley Cheese operation made a debut on television. Many children watched the Public Television series "Sesame Street" leave the streets of New York and go to the hills of Vermont to see how cheese was made.

The Crowley Cheese Factory is not a corny facsimile of Americana in action. The Smith family strives to maintain independence and inte-

grity for their product.

In Healdville, near Rutland, Vermont, the Crowley Cheese Factory and the Smith family invite visitors for a cheese sampling and a guided tour of traditional cheesemaking.

§

J.W. Savage lives in Winchester, Mass. He has written for Yankee, Saturday Evening Post, and Sturbridge Village publications. This month he begins a column for BitterSweet in which he will explore New England places.



The famous poem "Little Miss Muffet" took on a different meaning to the Smiths.

Little Miss Muffet

Sat on a tuffet.

Eating some curds and whey...

The key to cheese making comes from the fourth stomach of a cow. Rennet. No one is really sure just how cheese making began. Some say an Arab carrying milk in a bag made from the stomach of a cow found the milk curdled at the end of an afternoon journey. He tasted it. He liked it. Whatever the source, it's generally agreed that ancient people learned about rennet by accident.

Cheese making is a relatively simple operation. The culture of sour milk is added to unpasteurized milk straight from the cow, then heated to 90 degrees; rennet is added and, within a half-hour, 1,000 gallons of milk becomes two tons of a solid custard...or curds.

Once "set," this off-white mass of custard-like substance is cut by a wire rake into one-half inch cubes to further separate the curds and whey. After a little more cooking and stirring with a wooden rake, the whey is siphoned.

For many years, the whey was used as a form of barter with the local farmers, explained Peter Randolph, the President of Crowley Cheese. "Every wagon bringing milk was allowed to take some whey—one can less of whey than the number of cans the farmer had brought of milk."

Farmers used the whey as fertilizer and the remainder was dumped into a nearby stream. Years later, the state objected to the disposing of whey in the river, but not because the whey was hazardous material. Quite the contrary, the whey was so rich in nutrients that the weeds in the stream were growing out of con-

trol and clogging the water flow. Now the whey is used as fertilizer and as pig food.

To further separate the whey from the curd, one of the five employees draws a wire through the curd, cutting it into half-inch pieces. Then it's raked for another hour before being moved into vats. The breaking-up of the curd makes it a "Colby" cheese. In making a "Cheddar" cheese, the curd is not separated.

While in vats, the curd is washed in spring water, slightly salted for flavor. Then it is pressed into round molds lined with cheesecloth and left to age. Most cheese is aged for four months to produce a mild flavor, six months for a sharp taste, and aging over a year makes the cheese extra sharp.

Is all this handwork necessary? Does it produce a better cheese?

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the oldest continuously operating cheese factory in the country, the small, faded red building sits along a curve on a back road. It looks like a house whose owners will fix the front door, someday. Inside, the wide floor boards, almost white from wear, creak as guests and workers walk about the three rooms. Of course, there's a smell of cheese, but it adds to the sense of history. That's what the Crowley Cheese factory represents: a business that survives nicely with old world methods.

And that doesn't bother the current owner, Mr. Randolph Smith (who just celebrated his 83rd birthday) one iota. "I'm fortunate to just be a part of this," he says while nibbling on a piece of cheese. "This started as a cottage industry that helped local farmers and supported some of the local people. The factory still is a family business."

When the third generation Crowley died suddenly, people of the area didn't want to see the cheese factory become a memory. "They talked me into it," says Randolph. "But it didn't take much persuasion, and I was willing to be taught." He'd never anticipated being an owner of a cheese factory. Mr. Smith says with a chuckle, "I guess you could say that I retired from education and became a big cheese."

From someone else that might be corny, even blase, but from Mr. Smith it's a bit of honest humor. His first career of education took him to the American University in Beirut for many years. Later he moved to New York City, where he lived in the Greenwich Village area and taught at Columbia University. Then he served as the director of the progressive Little Red School.

However, since 1937, Randolph Smith and his family had been "vacationing" in Healdville, Vermont.

Back when land prices were exorbitant, "my current house with a couple of acres was a whopping \$500," Randolph explained. Maybe the prices have changed, but the way of life is still at an easy pace.

With the help of some of the old timers, and his wife and two sons—Peter, a schoolteacher in Belmont, Vermont, and Kent, an attorney in New York—Randolph looked over the operation with the intention of keeping the Crowley tradition alive. He says, "It didn't look that difficult." And from watching the operation that essentially takes place in a room about the size of a two car garage, the process of making cheese looks easy.

The Smiths were astounded. They learned quickly that cheese production is both an art and a science. And it's a process that uses a lot of milk—it takes about 8,000 pounds of milk to make 800 pounds of cheese!

Founder Winfield Crowley stirs cooking cheese curd with a wooden rake in 1927. The process is the same today (see next page).





HEADING OUT

with J.W. Savage

Carrying on A Tradition of Curds and Whey Crowley Cheese Factory

"All milk to be strained into the cans in good order, free from all taints or bad smell, and perfectly sweet." Such is one of the many handwritten dictates from A. Winfield Crowley to farmers supplying milk for his cheese in 1882.

SNOW IN THE SOUTH . . .

THE GREAT DIXIE BLIZZARD

by Dick Mitchell

The snow was just as I had imagined . . . big, white flakes falling like a feather, only a little faster. I had just come out of the Lafayette Community Center with a couple of buddies. We had been shooting basketball and had decided to go to the "show" (movie). Right here in Tallahassee! It was really snowing! We couldn't believe our eyes! In all my seventeen years, I had never seen snow!

It was early in the evening of February 12, 1958, when the snow began to fall and continued falling through the night. When it finally stopped, there was a full three inches of beautiful white snow covering all of North Florida and South Georgia.

I can relate from personal experience . . . school absenteeism was high! There were children and adults in every front yard playing in the snow, building snowmen, and engaging in snowball fights. Some of the students who did go to school were jetting down the hill in front of Leon High School on improvised sleds of cardboard and water skis.

There have been other snows in Tallahassee prior to and since the blizzard of '58; however, never as much snow nor enjoyed by so many people. During the early 1900's, there were a couple of inches of snow on the ground, and in 1974 and 1976, there was a trace. The most recent of measurable snow came on February 10, 1972, when we had almost "a half inch" on the ground. This, too, brought out an army of children, who built snowmen and other wintery spectacles.

Just remember . . . when Tallahassee gets snow, it's usually during the months of February and March. So, look out! If it's not snowing now, it may be very soon.



Roy L. Woods

D. Bruce Means



Southern Cook'n'

Green Peppered Chicken (Mexican Chicken)

- 1 can chicken broth
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can tomatoes
- 1 pkg. *corn* tortillas cut in 1" strips
- 1 chicken, deboned
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese

Bring to a boil: soups, broth and tomatoes. In oblong pan, layer tortillas, onions, chicken, cheese — continue until ingredients are used up. Top with cheese. Pour liquid mixture over the top. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

Patti LaPete
Spring Creek, FL

Lime Supreme Salad

- 1 large pkg. lime gelatin
- 4 cups hot water
- 1 large pkg. cream cheese
- 1 small pkg. miniature marshmallows
- 1 large can pineapple (drained)
- 1 large container whipped topping
- 1 cup nuts (optional)

In large bowl dissolve gelatin in hot water. Add cream cheese, mix at low speed until blended. Stir in pineapple and marshmallows. Add nuts. Fold in whipped topping. Chill until firm.

Faye Dailey
Woodville, FL

Mama Mae's Green Tomato Chip Pickles

- 1 ½ qts. green tomatoes
- ¾ qt. sweet red peppers
- ¾ qt. Vidalia or other mild onion
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pint cider vinegar
- 2 cups sugar
- ¼ cup salt

Chop tomatoes into large chunks, and place in a large bowl. Cover chunks with salt. Let stand while chopping onions and peppers. Pour off water accumulated from chopped tomatoes and rinse off salt. Place tomatoes and other vegetables in large pot. Pour in sugar and cider vinegar, and mix well. Bring quickly to a boil, then immediately reduce heat to low. Simmer until just tender, or color begins to change. Vegetables should still be slightly crisp. Do not overcook. Store in mason jars in refrigerator. For a spicier relish, hot red or green peppers may be added before cooking.

Lenore Hart
Chattahoochee, FL

Pistachio Salad

- 1 large can crushed pineapple (use juice)
- 1 small box pistachio instant pudding
- 1 large container whipped topping
- 1 cup nuts (pecans or walnuts)

Mix pineapple and juice with instant pudding. Fold in whipped topping and nuts. Chill.

Thelma Watts
Wakulla Station, FL

MARCH FESTIVALS and SPECIAL EVENTS

Festivals and special events reflect the very heart of the land and its people. They mirror its heritage, showcase its products, and perpetuate its ties to the past. Some are free; some charge nominal fees. All are inexpensive entertaining ways to learn more about, and to enjoy more fully, this bountiful tri-state region.

Events in March focus on history, lifestyles and leisure pursuits.

MARCH 4: The Natural Bridge state historic site in Woodville, just south of Tallahassee, becomes the setting for a re-enactment of the Civil War battle it commemorates. Cannons and muskets blaze as authentically attired troops engage in a realistic three-hour battle. It depicts the 12-hour siege during the final weeks of the war, in which some 700 Confederate volunteers — including old men, young boys and cadets as young as 14 — met and repelled Union troops trying to cross the St. Marks River at the point where the river vanishes underground for a short distance. Their victory made Tallahassee the only Confederate capital east of the Mississippi not captured by the Union. Admission is free and activities begin at 1:00 p.m.

THRU MID-MARCH: In Tallahassee a special collection of Seminole Indian artifacts, paintings and other material is featured at the Museum of Florida History. This special traveling exhibit began in late February and will remain until mid-March.

MARCH 8 & 9: Do-si-do's ring out in two area cities: at the Square and Round Dance Festival in Mobile, March 8 & 9; and at the Clogging Festival in Tallahassee, March 22 & 23.

MARCH 8-10: Tallahassee Junior Museum's Antique Show will be held at the North Florida fairgrounds. The museum also offers two March dates for its Audubon Film Series: "Song of the Northern Prairie" / Allen J. King, March 2; and "The Wild Trek Through New Zealand" / Grant Foster, March 16.

MARCH 13-17: Home tours, always popular, are another way to return to earlier eras. Handsomely preserved/restored structures remain enduring links with the past and offer glimpses of their gracious lifestyles. Some of Mobile's southern antebellum homes will be open to the public during its Tour of Homes. (Thomasville, Georgia's popular Home Tours are held every other year, and is not scheduled in March 1985.)

MARCH 16-MAY 31: Colorful azaleas take the spotlight in Mobile during the city's noted Azalea Trail Festival. The well-marked Trail winds its way for 35 miles in and around the city, leading past dazzling arrays of the early-spring flowers. Several miles of alternate routes are offered. Although the Trail may be driven in two hours, it's best to allow perhaps twice the time, particularly for those who wish to take pictures.

MARCH 28: In the western reaches of Florida's panhandle, the town of Milton recalls and relishes its early days with a festive celebration called Scratch Ankle. The name is not some catchy festival gimmick but an actual early name of the community. Established in 1825 as a trading post on the banks of the Blackwater River, it was called Scratch Ankle — also Hard Scrabble — as a warning of its numerous briar patches that caused painful ankles for those who had to scramble their way to the town. According to local lore many were smugglers, however, attempting to avoid paying tariffs at the official import-export station in nearby Pensacola. Today its history makes colorful conversation and a dandy excuse for the festival, which includes a Little Mr. and Miss Scratch Ankle pageant, a parade, food and games, sports activities and a fair with numerous food booths.

MARCH 31-APRIL 18: Spring art shows begin with the Transparent Watercolors Show in Panama City.

Joice Veselka

FROM THE PUBLISHER . . .

When you read this, it will have been almost eighteen months since I purchased *BitterSweet*. Another "giant step" is in progress . . .

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN . . . I knew absolutely nothing about magazine publication when I purchased *BitterSweet*, but I did have a good friend, George Moneyhun, who had spent most of his adult life in the newspaper business, writing and publishing an historical novel . . . and he did know parts of the business. Early in 1983 George learned that *BitterSweet* was for sale, so together we decided to set forth on a new business venture. We decided to move the magazine home to Cornish in the rear of the Cornish Country Inn where George and his wife Judy were the innkeepers. We felt that the inn and the magazine would complement each other nicely. However, something else was in the picture that we knew nothing about, because after closing the transaction on the purchase of the magazine on a Friday, George suddenly passed on the following Sunday. Immediately came the question as to what to do.

While Nancy Marcotte agreed to work closely with us, distances complicated the matter. Shortly thereafter Harry Bee came as editor-in-chief.

A large debt of gratitude goes to Nancy whose love for and dedication to *BitterSweet* brought it through its first seven years. She continues to be a vital part of our organization, and we expect her to continue. Others help our publication go forward. Our Advertising Representatives are most dedicated and helpful in reaching out to various businesses in the area.

WHERE WE ARE GOING . . . It is my desire for *BitterSweet* to continue its purpose while expanding its limits. I feel it is important that we share in celebrating all the happy, useful and interesting parts of our lives, our area and our culture with those of similar and curious interests. Therefore, *BitterSweet* continually welcomes your submissions of articles, recipes, photographs and your comments. We may not always agree, but we can listen, learn and become better friends.

BitterSweet South will do for the rural southeast what *BitterSweet* has done, and plans to continue doing, in northern New England. The March issue is a pull-out section in *BitterSweet*.

I still plan to publish both magazines. My sister, Faye Dailey, will be Editor-in-Chief of *BitterSweet South*, and we will have a staff in Florida to be in charge of this magazine. BitterSweet, Inc., the corporation, owns both publications, and there are no plans to change. As with any fledgling, we are listening carefully for each step, plan to learn from prior experiences but expect to improve daily.

We appreciate each employee, each advertiser, each subscriber and each reader, for it takes all of us to make this operation go forward. Together, let's celebrate the right to share our lives with each other as we live in one of the most glorious countries in the world where we have the right to a free press. May God richly bless each of you and our magazine as we go forward.

Elaine W. Dougherty



Owner — Pat Kirkland

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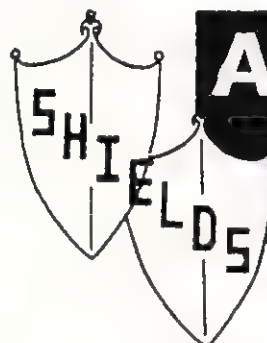


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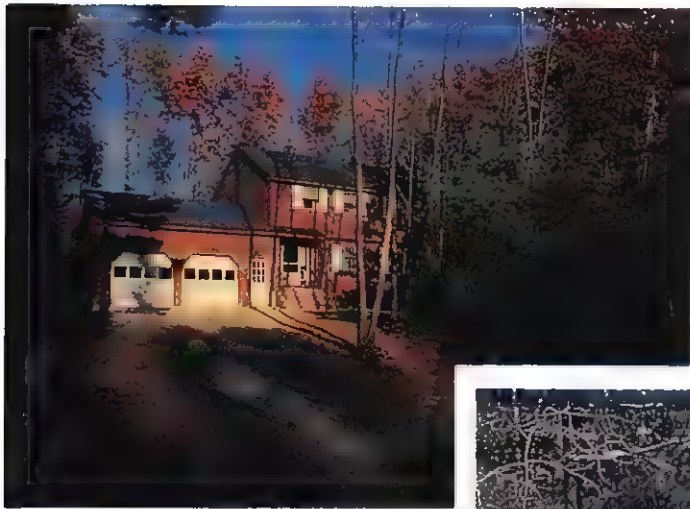
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POSTAGE STAMP FARM

by Carolyn Ekle

Anxiously, we signed on the last dotted line, not daring to breathe. Was it really going to happen? Was the house finally ours?

I pictured a gleaming, productive farm; Bill saw 30 years of staggering debt. I saw a lush green, front lawn; Bill saw 200 miles of mowing a year. I pictured a cozy fire; Bill had a nightmare stacking six cords of wood. I dreamed of farm-fresh eggs in the morning, Bill had visions of manure rotting his shoes.

We moved on a crackling cold day in January. Snow was two feet deep on the ground and gleaming white. Moving truck following behind, we turned the corner into our driveway and slid into a snow bank.

You might think being a Floridian would be a handicap in a situation like this. Not so. You get out of a snowbank in New Hampshire the same way you would in Florida, if you ever had snow in Florida. Bill jockeyed the car—forward, reverse, forward, reverse—and we slipped still deeper in the soft snow. I opened the window and looked out.

"Bill," I said, "I believe we're going to have to dig out of this one."

He glared and spun the wheels



once more. Turning the steering wheel as far as it would go to the left—we were wedged on the right side of the car—he slapped the gear into reverse and hit the gas. Front wheels were cranked too far to the side and acted like a brake. Tires spun noisily on the ice.

"A little less crank," Bill grunted, turning the wheel slightly, and stomping on the gas.

Whooooosh, thump! My goodness, we'd moved. Now we were stuck on the opposite side of the driveway.

"First priority is a wider driveway," he said.

Gingerly this time, he backed the car out of the driveway and parked on the street.

The movers surveyed the driveway and decided to back up it. After half an hour of slipping, sliding and

head scratching, they parked the truck at the bottom of the driveway.

"Some hill you got here, mister," one of them said.

What came next was a typical moving day routine. The bottom of the piano was splintered on the front steps, the walls going up the stairway were gouged, and the solid oak floor inherited some nicks and drag marks. These were cheerfully given at no extra charge.

Not one dish or glass was broken, though. We had moved all the fragile items ourselves carload by carload.

We said goodbye to the movers, set up the cat's litter box, turned on the heat, and breathed a sigh of relief and contentment. We were in.

Two weeks later, we saw our first electric bill and immediately turned

down the heat. Four weeks later, we shut off some rooms and set the thermostats lower. We moved the TV to the bedroom and lived under the electric blanket.

Spring came and as we thawed out I said, "The way I see it, we either change our heating fuel or move. My bones may not warm up even in the sweltering heat and humidity of August."

In back-to-basics tradition, we bought a woodstove. While I pictured romantic candlelit dinners by the woodstove, Bill saw himself as a human sacrifice to the may flies, mosquitoes, garter snakes, and squirrels. The sweat that poured off him as he stacked his first six cords of wood would have watered the garden for an entire season. Wood warms you twice, all right. Next time we'll stack in the fall when it's cool or maybe even wait until it's cold.

I made iced tea for him, first by the pitcher, then by the gallon. Making tea was the only way I could get a break from stacking. He likes his tea brewed so it took a while for each batch.

We had but one area where we could stack the wood. Unfortunately it was on the opposite side of the house from the woodstove. From there, we either had to lug the wood in the front door and through the entire length of the living room or bring it in the back door and carry it from one end of the house to the other. Bringing it in through the front also meant shovelling the front walk and steps—something I hadn't planned on having to do. On the other hand, I didn't particularly want the whole house woodchipped either. Bill solved the dilemma: since he was stacking the majority of the wood, he didn't mind if I shovelled the front walk and steps in winter. We'd bring the wood in the front door.

After the wood was delivered, we let it sit for a month or so. That was a mistake. In that time, a garter snake and all his relations moved in. They weren't too pleased with us as we uncovered their hiding places. The squirrels weren't happy either. Our cart kept bumping the tree they had set up housekeeping in. Every time we inadvertently hit the tree, they accurately bombarded us with nuts and sticks. Then they ran

back and forth between the trees scolding us for invading their territory. The neighbors thought we were developing a new kind of break dancing as we dodged the snakes underfoot while shielding ourselves from the furious fusillade above.

During the long, cold winter, my sluggish brain and frozen fingers had planned a self-sufficient garden. Our house faces southwest, so, you guessed it, the best place for the garden was right in the front yard. Bill couldn't bear to part with the front weedpatch, after all it was green, so the garden had to go out back—facing north-east and shaded from the sun by the house. The lie of the land out there is high facing west—slanting—low facing east, thereby shading itself from the afternoon sun. The wind pattern is from west to east, forcing cold

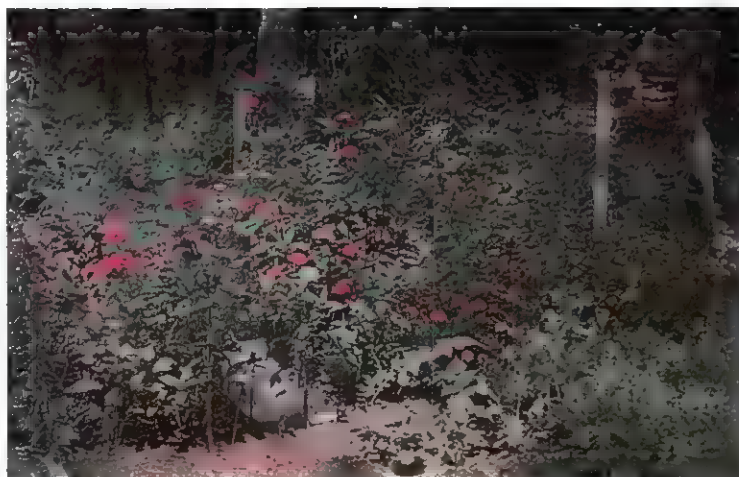
air to fall in a pocket at the easterly end. Perhaps we could grow arctic vegetables?

The soil was hard packed, acidic, and produced stones at a prodigious rate. Undaunted, we tilled, limed, fertilized, raked up hills, and seeded. Then we weeded, manured, hoed, and watered. We set up an experimental area where we seeded by casting,

much like grass seeding. We even fenced the corn to keep out the raccoons.

In sheer exhaustion, we sat back to watch it grow. And grow it did. Everything came up: five-foot-tall dandelions, prickly burrs, more stones, maple seedlings, oak seedlings, more stones, unknown weeds, and Japanese beetles. Then came the vegetables, growing into healthy, hardy, bearing plants. Japanese beetles love skyscrapers. They took over the dandelions and chewed them down to size. Then they took over some unknown tall weeds and sized them down. They didn't touch any of the vegetable plants.

Finally, we noticed the first signs of our crop: tiny round canteloupe, green beans, green tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, corn, peas, lettuce, broccoli, sunflowers, radishes. One blazing August morning, we looked down over the crop and noticed empty spaces where there should have been growth. We raced outside. To our astonishment, several corn stalks had been cut down.



"Raccoons, it's got to be raccoons," I said.

That night we left the yard light on to discourage predators. The next morning several more stalks were laying on the ground. We left the cats out at night. Somehow we managed to sleep between their bouts of yowling and climbing the screen door. More corn stalks gone. Cut down in their prime with only an inch of stubble left in the ground. All the baby ears had been tasted and found lacking in flavor, ripeness, and sweetness. Every night we lost more corn until the whole patch was stubble. Taste and see extended to the canteloupe.

The next morning as the sun rose over the horizon, I hid behind the curtains and watched the garden. I saw the plants moving, our predator was coming.

"Quick, Bill, get the slingshot," I whispered.

Cautiously he opened the door and armed the slingshot. Tips of ears appeared above the vines.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Don't know. Can't tell ear tips apart."

Slowly, he sidled into view: a fat, bushy-tailed squirrel. Bill shot a marble. The squirrel disappeared up a tree. Bill retreated behind the doorway. The squirrel peeked from behind a tree.

"He's on the backside of the front pine tree," I said.

"Backside, front," Bill murmured, mounting another marble.

Whack! Scrabble. Whack! Scrabble. Whoosh! Angry scolding. The squirrel played hide and seek until all Bill's marbles gleamed gloriously on the ground in the morning sun.

"Now what?" Bill hissed.

"Bushy Tail wins round one and some food," I commented dryly.

By the time fall came, we'd eaten most of our crop. The peas were so tender and tasty, they never made it into the pot for cooking. At dinnertime, we took a dinnerplate into the garden and filled up with beans, lettuce, tomatoes, whatever looked ripe. Then we'd sit on the red brick path and eat, watched by many curious insects, three cats, and a dog.

It took the dog a couple of nights to figure out what we were doing. When he caught on that we were eating and he wasn't, he joined right in. His favorite were the peas. The cats thought we were all crazy. Why bother to eat when you can roll in catnip?

Fresh vegetables tasted so much better, we decided to put up our own for the winter. As our favorites (carrots, squash, broccoli, green peppers, onions, and potatoes) were harvested, we bought large quantities from local farms. If you want to develop your tennis forehand, peeling and slicing sixty pounds of winter squash will do it.

We don't have a root cellar, but we do have an unheated basement so we set it up for cold storage. Using 40-gallon trash cans, we intermixed layers of 100

pounds of potatoes and 40 pounds of carrots. One of our favorite fruits is apples. We stored about two bushels, layered with newspaper to absorb sweat, in another 40-gallon trash can. In the freezer, we put about six heads of broccoli, 10 pounds of diced onions, 60 pounds of squash, and 20 pounds of green peppers.

We started feasting in November and by the end of April we and our many dinner companions had eaten everything in storage. I can still smell the aroma of stuffed turkey, golden winter squash, fluffy mashed potatoes, hot bread, creamed onions, and baked apple a-la-mode.

If home-grown vegetables tasted that good, wouldn't home-grown eggs taste better, too? Bill said no way would we have chickens. I tried him on horses and goats; he settled for chickens. We have friends in the egg business so we were able to purchase 4-month-old hens. In less than two months, they were laying eggs.

In the meantime, we had no place to house them. A quick trip to the library and the local farm bureau gave us all the information we needed to build a chicken coop. We started building in March to be ready for an April delivery.

Traditionally, spring comes on March 22. That year spring showed up sometime in June, disguised as summer. The ides-of-March winds blew like the Montreal





moving the 16-foot wall was a Herculean task which eventually involved three of us and a dog. Don't ask—you really don't want to know.

Those walls built muscle. Digging through frozen substrata would have been child's play after moving the four walls and the roof. To hang on the roof, we tied a stout rope to one end, leaned the roof against the shortest wall, threw the rope over the opposite wall, and *pulled* it into place.

When the chickens arrived, we were putting the finishing touches on their new home. We had 30 Rhode Island Reds, and they each laid an egg about every 26 hours.

They were tasty eggs, not needing any seasoning to give them an eggy flavor. The yellow centers captured the sun, beaming golden rays around the breakfast table. Now, for all three meals we simply take a basket outdoors and pick our food: veggies and berries from the garden, protein from the coop. We have three supermarkets within three miles of the house, but it's much more fun to "go picking" as we say.

Carolyn Ekle sent us the story and accompanying photos from her family's home in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Express blasting us with 10 below zero wind chill factors. We may have been builders but we were dressed like spacemen—covered from head to toe. In the frigid air, we moved at about the same speed as spacemen. If the air temperature hadn't been enough to tell us it was still winter, the spade bouncing off the ground told us. We had to dig four separate holes, each large enough to place cinder blocks upright in the ground. We picked the flattest area but even it had about a 15-degree slant. Redoing the calculations, we discovered we only needed two 18" deep holes. The other two only had to be 3-to-6" deep.

It was time for the pickaxe. It bit right into the ground—one-half inch at a time. We had thought the surface was frozen until we tried to get through the last six inches. It wasn't merely frozen, it was a solid, rock-like substance, which gave a stiff bounce to the pickaxe, making it easier to lift for the next downswing.

We did the framing in modular units, framing each wall on the ground then lifting it into place and anchoring it to the base. Lifting and



A Still Life

by Natalie McCormick Parsons

The ice is now close to three inches thick. The hardy fisherfolk drill their holes and scoop the ice fragments with ladles surreptitiously appropriated from a kitchen drawer. Setting their traps, they patiently await the first flag to signal a catch. Two men come every year to our quiet cove, go through the ritual of drilling, scooping, and drinking beer, as they pace from hole to hole. Each time they carry away perch, pickerel, and bass.

Down the road a neighbor fills her freezer with lake fish. She bought a bob-house complete with Coleman stove, an easy chair, a coffeepot, and a few good books. Occasionally, her husband will strap a drink to the

collar of their golden retriever and send him off to the bob-house. All the comforts of home and the added joy of anticipating the grand smell of fish chowder bubbling on the wood stove.

My husband also fishes our cove—to no avail. The wily fish seem to know that Don is out on his little camp stool—waiting. They carefully nibble his bait and then swim saucily away, flipping their tail fins jauntily in his direction. Our neighbor has fish chowder simmering, we've never had one small fish to fry.

But hope springs eternal, etc., so we keep trying. Guess we'd best dust off our ice skates and hope we don't trip over a fishing hole. §

THE HOME PLACE

Everyone has a special place,
The place that they call home.
A place that lingers in your heart
When folks and place have gone.
Its face may change throughout the years,
New folks may live there now,
But in your mind when you return
It's smiling as before.
Its papered walls and pictures hang
As in the days long gone
And there is no finer place on earth
Than the one we all called home.

I think this poem is true of all of us whether we will admit it or not. The farm still stands on Stearns Hill in West Paris, Maine, off route twenty-six, its now-enclosed porch overlooking the valley of South Paris, Norway and beyond. The tower at Raymond is easily seen at night, the tower on Streaked Mountain a near neighbor in the day. Although the farm of Antti Piirainen, our nearest neighbor in earlier days, was once clearly visible, the trees have grown enough so the only glimpse now seen is the top of the barn roof.

My Grandmother, Vivia Swift Richardson (otherwise known as Nana) said the barn was there before she was born in 1885 and was owned by a man named Shaw. So far I have not been to the Courthouse to find out which Shaw but I will some day. The original house was a Cape Cod type set on the bank of the road and a huge clump of lilacs marks the spot. At that time the road ran in front of this house, behind the barn and down our lane from the barn to the pasture gate where it became the Gates Hill Road and still is. Daniel and Lydia DeCoster Swift bought the buildings and land from Mr. Shaw



The Home Place

Recollections by Virginia Cyr



*Top — Virginia Cyr's family home in West Paris, Maine in the 1950's.
Bottom — the view of the homestead from lookout hill.*

and in April of 1885 their nephew Ambrose and his wife Mary Coolidge-Staples Swift bought it from them. They and their twin sons, Harold and Gerald, and daughter, Vivian, lived with neighbors Richard and Lottie Gates for awhile in 1894 when the town road was changed to its present position and a new house was being built up by the barn. Being practical New Englanders who could not see freezing themselves to death with a bitter cold trip between house and barn several times a day, they connected the new house to the

barn. Some time in the 1890's, Ambrose and Mary planted the eight maples still standing behind the house. A good many gallons of syrup have come from those trees, boiled down on the kitchen stove (it didn't peel the wallpaper off the walls, *quite*) or in the sap house of later years.

In 1905, Nana married Clarence Richardson and went to his Greenwood-Richardson Hollow home to live for a year or so before they returned to the farm. Sometime, probably around 1907-8, fifty feet

was added to the back of the barn.

Nana and Grampa had two children. Gordon, when he died at sixteen of appendicitis, left his legacy of his school project—the henhouse—and his initials carved into a big rock on the edge of the lawn. Both must have been pretty good projects for they are still there. Somehow I always missed the uncle I had never known, and I used to wonder, as I traced the stone initials, what he might have thought of his niece. I never wondered what he looked like for his pictures hung on the living

*At right is
Whitefoot and
Glory; Mickey
and Kay; Misty
Cow and Virginia.*



THE HOME PETS

When I was young and on the farm,
Those days were bright and gay.
Like any kid I had no cares
And only sunny days.
Depression time when I was born,
Hard times, I heard folks say.
But there was food and clothes to wear
And love for us each day.
We didn't need the fancy clothes
Or toys or dolls or trucks.
Who needed dolls when there was a cat
Who was willing to be dressed up?
Old Whitey smiled and let us play
And purred when we picked her up.
A cuddly baby she did make

Until she'd had enough.
Then she would jump and run away
And wouldn't let us catch her
Until, at last, we'd go back to dolls
Or perhaps some other creature.
Tippy did not mind wearing a dress
(Though toy terriers usually don't)
But he loved to ride in the doll carriage
And tea parties were the tops.
When all else failed we could get
old Tony,
Mama's horse when she was young.
Now old and wise and sedate enough
To be trusted with two young ones.
By climbing on the pasture fence
Or the chopping block or a chair
We could manage to reach her back

With a helping handful of hair.
We climbed on frontwards, backwards,
And bottomsides up
Killed flies upon her belly,
Lifted her feet, played with her nose
And slid over her rounding rump.
And when we wanted to explore
She'd take us saddleback.
Of course the saddle was her hide
And the backside of our own
For Kay nor I nor even both
Could lift the saddle she should have
worn.
Then into the woods the three of us went,
My sister Kay and me
And Tony was the grandest horse
A kid could hope to see.

room walls and still hang in my Mother's home. My mother, Frances, was left in limbo at the loss of her older brother and, trying to find some consolation for his grieving child, Grampa bought a fancy, high-stepping, green-broke saddle horse fresh from the West, complete with saddle and bridle. Tony was a handful then, Mama remembers, but she figured quite largely in my memories later on as you will see if you continue to read this story.

Originally the house was an L-shape, but in 1922 Grampa added a dining and bedroom downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs to square off the house. We get down to my generation when Mama (Frances Richardson) married a young man from Sebago Lake, Hartley Ward. They had three daughters: Virginia, Kathryn and Gloria. Must I admit I am the oldest? Well, maybe, just this once. Eventually we became Cyr, Daniels and Hadley but not before an extension to the south side of the barn arrived. Daddy lived to see a new oil furnace replace the good old wood burner, a new chimney built for it which covered the entire project with thick dust for weeks, and to enjoy the rebuilt, enclosed porch before he passed away in 1963. Fifty-three was much too young, though he outlived the doctors' predictions by a year and a half mainly, I think, by a strong desire to do so. Mama remarried Floyd Dean in 1965 and with two little words (I do) he gained not only a wife but three daughters, sons-in-law and six grandchildren! I wonder if he knew what he was getting into. We used to tease him about that but he only smiled and (I think) loved us all. We certainly loved him. Gloria and Maurice Hadley extended an upstairs attic over the porch to make a sunny, windowed kitchen and, except for some inside remodeling, the house remains the same today. Rodney and Cheryl Leach live there now and



flocks of sheep dot the home fields, the lambs a delight to watch in the spring and summer.

HELPING OUT

Kids today, they have it made.
At least, that's what folks say.
But I was raised in a different time
And in different ways.
There were chores to do and wood to chop
And cows to feed and hay
And crops to hoe and calves to tend.
Yes, ours were different ways.
We rode the horse to cultivate
The corn between the rows.
My sisters and I helped with the work
Because there were no boys.
Every fall the woodpile called
We chopped and hauled it in.
But when the winter winds did blow
We were snug and warm within.
In springtime came the maple sap
With buckets, spiles and tapping.
Horse and sled to haul it in
The sap house was inviting.
And sheepskins then we all would make,
Hot syrup on cold snow.
No better candy could be made,
That we all did know.
But there was time to slide and swim
And laugh and play and shout.
We never had to work, you see,
We were only "helping out."

BitterSweet - August 1979

NEDDY AND BILLY

Now everyone knows that goats are dumb,

They smell and they eat the flowers.
But these two goats were our pets
And we played with them for hours.

When they were kids and very small
We taught them to be led
By a halter of rope or maybe old reins
That we dug out of Grampa's shed.
As they grew bigger we found with
delight

That on their backs we could ride
And we raced the roads
Or crept through the woods
Our sixguns at our side.
As we got bigger our legs were too long
And brushed the ground as we rode,
So we changed to harness and wagon or
sled

Depending what covered the ground.
Looking back it was not all play we had
For we had to care for our goats, too.
Feed and clean and groom them both
And try to keep them out of a stew.
Nana scowled when they ate her plants,
Daddy cussed when they climbed on the
car,

Mama cried when they ate her stockings-
She didn't have many pairs.
Now the goats are gone and so are the
girls

For bigger and better things,
But they linger still in memory's whirls
When goats and girls were kings.

Laughter, tears, sorrow and happiness befall us all but in our "home place" they merge, past and present, not always perhaps as they were but as we choose to remember. And memories are something that never change, never fail. They return as faithfully as the leaves on the eight big maples every spring—all we have to do is be patient and wait. Life goes on—life changes—life remains the same.

SAP SEASON

Maple syrup is glorious stuff,
Dark and thick and sweet.
But there's a lot of work behind
Each gallon of that treat.
Every year when springtime came
And the sky's that special blue
Came a chore we both dreaded
And happily looked forward to.
After weeks in the barn the horses came
out

Stiff-legged, shaggy and blinking.
It took a few hills to work out the kinks
And remind them of work to be thinking.
For roads must be broken through the
snow

And sap buckets and covers set out.
So when Kay and I came home from
school

They would start the sapping routes.
Daddy and Kay, all loaded down,
Grampa and I the same
Each took a load on a separate line
And began to tap the trees.
The men handled spiles and bits and
drills

Kay and I carried buckets and covers
And sometimes needed a helping hand
When we missed our step and rolled over.
Sometimes the ground was totally bare
Which made our life much easier.
But I doubt if the horses liked it at all
When sled runners gave out their
screeching.

Once trees were tapped and trails broken
out

We'd wait for the sap to run
And when it did we went every day
With buckets to carry it in.



Duke and Andy, hauling sap

Now there's nothing like a boot full
of sap

So sticky and gooey and wet.
And naturally it always happened
On the very first bucket you'd set!
No time to waste—just tote that sap
To the gathering tank on the sled.
When it was full ride down to the house
Grampa's fire was roaring and ready.
With plenty of wood piled close at
hand—

Now lower that drain pipe steady!!
Back to the woods for another load
And work 'till it got dark.
Weekends were easy—we had all day
Not just after school as a lark.
Glory was small then and went for the
ride—

Though later she did her share—
And it was hard work but it was fun
To be out in the springtime air.
But this work of ours was more than
fun.

Grampa's syrup went far and wide.
And people came from miles around
To our peaceful countryside.

The money paid our taxes all
Or was our ace in the hole.
Or perhaps paid off the summer's debt
When crops died or prices were low.
We all had our tasks that we could do
To get this spring job done.
Mama drove horses or carried the sap
Or sometimes did the chores.
Nana strained the syrup through a
special felt hat

Washed and labeled the cans
Best of all made maple candy
And our very favorite—sheepskins.
They were syrup boiled real thick
And poured on a basin of snow.
Peel it off and plop in your mouth
and chew and chew and chew.
Dixie the dog loved them too
And teased 'till she got one.
Then we'd all laugh and watch her
Try to lap it off her tongue.
No more the sap house is filled with
steam

Nor some who lived this poem.
But every spring the old call comes—
Hey folks, sap's a-runnin'.

Homemade

Sourdough Baking

CATCHING WILD YEASTS

by Georgene Bramlage

Using wild yeasts in a starter instead of commercial packaged yeasts for leavening made a comeback in my New England kitchen this past winter. Christmas greetings from a friend who lives in the Nebraska Panhandle pictured a contented cowboy flipping flapjacks over a wood burning stove. Printed inside the card were recipes for sourdough starter and the cowboy's pancakes.

I dug out cookbooks I hadn't looked at since I lost my last batch of sourdough starter 10 years ago. I bought more cookbooks and friends lent me recipes. And then, tucked away in a travel guide, I found recipes I had collected from a cooking demonstration at Nebraska's Scotts Bluff National Monument on the Oregon Trail.

My family has enjoyed the yeasty kitchen smells these past few months, and a few failures aside, we have eaten well. I've dreamed dreams of the Old West during the worst of the winter, learned a lot about sourdough cooking—and gained five pounds.

Baking and cooking with a sourdough starter can be as easy as one, two, three...all it takes is catching, keeping and using the wild yeasts that surround us. Wild yeasts are airborne, microscopic fungi that are always there. Some yeasts are undesirable, but others (most probably strains of the genus *Saccharomyces*) are nourished by and thrive in flour and water. The Latin name *Saccharomyces* literally means "sugar fungus." Wild yeasts work slowly at

making the carbon dioxide and alcohol which cause dough to rise and acquire that taste so unique to sourdough.

I tried the Christmas cowboy's instruction for a starter but wondered, "Would something as simple as potato water and flour really work?" The last time I did sourdough baking, an Amherst friend gave some established starter to me.

Within three days, my brew was merrily bubbling and emitting yeasty fumes. I kept it in a bean pot—covered to keep cats and soot out—on the bricks underneath the Jotul wood burning stove in our kitchen-family room.

Instructions for catching a starter may vary in particulars, but they all agree on one thing: never mix the ingredients in a metal container. The chemistry won't work because the fermenting mixture is corrosive. It's said the old-timers used their sourdough starter to polish brass. Here are the cowboy's instructions for a very simple sourdough starter:

Boil some potatoes and save the water. Use two cups lukewarm potato water with just enough unbleached white flour to make a thick dough. Put this mixture into a crock, cover and set in a warm place to ferment for a few days.

The instructions from the Scotts Bluff demonstration are slightly different: *Stir two cups of white flour, three tablespoons of sugar, one tablespoon of salt, one tablespoon of vinegar and add enough water to make a thin batter. This starter*

works at room temperature—during the summer. It takes about a week to ten days before the mixture can be used.

Wild yeasts cause the mixture to bubble and froth. If no yeasts are caught—and some experts say the best ones are caught either outdoors or in a kitchen where there has been a lot of baking—the end result is a bowl of smelly, moldy flour. I was lucky; not only did I catch yeasts on the first try, but they were tasty ones. Some wild yeasts taste obnoxious and are best thrown out along with the moldy flour.

Western pioneers considered pancakes to be a satisfying and wholesome meal, I'm told. The flapjacks also require very little effort. My family likes them for the same reasons, but it takes only a few of the sourdough cakes to fill their stomachs.

Instructions for making flapjacks are pretty much the same no matter where the recipes come from. There are those experts, however, who view the use of evaporated milk as a sacrilegious addition to the batter.

I like to think I take a pragmatic point of view. If I have milk handy, I add milk... When I have an extra egg or two, I use these and have flapjacks a bit lighter than I might otherwise. I like to imagine that the ladies of the prairie used the same approach.

The only real effort in sourdough cooking is remembering to save enough of the starter to be able to extend what I have in the crock. I usually just add equal amounts of



warm water and flour to the crock before returning it to its spot under the stove. Some recipes call for a special "extending" step to make sure the cook always begins with new starter. The recipe from the Scotts Bluff demonstration is a good example:

SCOTTS BLUFF PANCAKES

Mix 1 cup of starter in a large bowl with 2 cups of warm water and about 2½ cups of flour. Cover and let stand in a warm place several hours or overnight. Then take out 1 cup. This is the new starter for another baking.

To the remainder of the starter left in the bowl add:

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 or 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons liquid or dry milk
- 1 scant teaspoon soda
- 3 or 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 or 2 eggs

Mix well and cook on hot griddle.

Here is a recipe from the northern goldfields of Alaska that uses fewer ingredients. Baking soda is added at the last minute for additional leavening.

ALASKA SOURDOUGH HOTCAKES

- 2 cups sourdough starter
bubbling and frothing
- 2 tablespoons sugar or honey if a really sweet taste is desired
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 scant teaspoon soda; a little more if the starter is really sour

Mix sourdough, sweetening, egg and oil together well. Dilute soda in one tablespoon of warm water. Fold gently into the sourdough at the last minute when the batter is ready for the griddle. **Do not beat.** There should be a deep hollow sound as the sourdough fills with bubbles and doubles in bulk.

The cowboy flapjacks are the simplest and make great breakfast or supper fare on a camping trip or in a cottage because no perishable ingredients are used.

COWBOY SOURDOUGH FLAPJACKS

- 1 cup sourdough starter
bubbling and frothing
- 2 tablespoons bacon grease or vegetable oil (the oil produces a blander tasting cake)
- 1 cup flour
- ¼ cup evaporated milk

Mix the above four ingredients together and then blend in carefully and thoroughly:

- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- pinch of salt

Let this mixture bubble for a minute and then drop by spoonful onto a hot griddle. Warm syrup and a pot of camp coffee go well with this.

During nonbaking stretches, my sourdough starter is refrigerated in a glass canning jar fitted with a loose cover. Newer cookbooks even say starter can be frozen—in a glass or plastic container with enough room for expansion—if the cook isn't going to use it for a while.

Apparently the old-timers' fear of

cold killing their starters were unfounded. There's no need to tuck a crock of starter into the toe of your sleeping bag as they supposedly did—unless you want flapjacks the first thing in the morning.

Keeping the crock on the back of an overheated stove, however, finishes off a starter. Heat over 95 degrees kills the yeasts outright. Heat between 80 and 95 degrees causes the starter to sputter and bubble, and, if left unattended, the yeasts grow like crazy using up all their nutrients and creating an alcoholic environment in which they die.

An overaged starter—one on the brink of self-destruction—can be rescued by "sweetening the pot." (Maybe old-time western gamblers had Mom's baking in mind when they used that expression to mean money to raise the ante.) Yeasts need carbohydrates to keep going, and it doesn't matter whether a little honey or sugar is added to the crock; the sweetener will renew the starter.

I found my overaged starter could be revived by transferring a cup of it to a mixture of two cups warm water and the same amount of flour in a clean container. After this, I had to let it age for a day or so before using it again. Then I was careful to keep the starter refrigerated unless I had plans to use it pretty soon. If you don't plan to use the starter once or twice a week, it's best to keep it refrigerated.

Here is a recipe for old-time sourdough biscuits that my three children really enjoyed. Once the starter is working, they are quick to prepare and have a texture like English muffins. We imagine they are similar to

the ones enjoyed by pioneer families as they moved around the frontier in the late 1800's.

SOURDOUGH BISCUITS

Sourdough starter - either bubbling or taken from the refrigerator

4 to 5 cups of unbleached white flour

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

2 teaspoons drippings or vegetable shortening for greasing the pan

Either have starter working on the back of the stove or take from the refrigerator and stir one cup starter into a mixture of 2 cups warm water and 2½ cups of flour. Cover and let stand in a warm place (75 to 80 degrees) for at least four hours. Hold back one cup of starter for future baking and refrigerate if necessary.

Mix 2 cups of flour, salt and baking soda together until completely blended. Then stir in the bubbling sourdough until all ingredients are blended and moist.

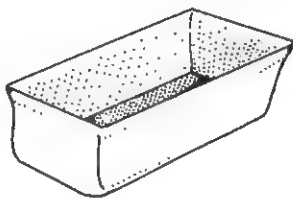
Pat the dough flat on a floured board using floured hands. Roll out lightly with floured rolling pin. (Too much handling will cause tough biscuits—so be careful!) When the dough is about ½-inch thick cut into squares with a sharp knife or circles with an old clean soup can or a regular biscuit cutter.

Bake for about 15 to 20 minutes in a hot (425 degrees) oven until browned. A half-hour's rising time on the greased baking sheet will

produce lighter-textured and better-looking biscuits.

Here are two recipes for sourdough white bread. The first tastes a little bland because no salt is used and the only leavening is the sourdough starter. Salt slows down the action of the wild yeasts that are usually not in any hurry to work in the first place.

The second recipe uses commercial yeast for an extra boost and calls for a little salt. The texture of these loaves is a little lighter than those in the first recipe. Both make very good eating warm from the oven.



SALTLESS SOURDOUGH BREAD

1 cup sourdough starter already working

½ cup scalded milk, cooled to lukewarm; or ½ cup lukewarm water

3 tablespoons butter, margarine or drippings

2 tablespoons sugar

2½ to 3 cups unbleached white flour

1 egg yolk, mixed with 1 tablespoon water if you want a glossy crust

HINTS ON SOURDOUGH COOKING

1. Give yourself and the starter plenty of time. Wild yeasts are lazier than those we can buy.

2. Failure to catch a starter the first time is no cause to cry. Throw the mess away and try again.

3. Sourdough starter is nothing more than flour and water that's captured a homegrown yeast factory. Any recipe for starter is good—it's the taste that counts.

4. Pay attention to a good starter—it's like having a new pet in the house. Avoid overheating. Store in the freezer or refrigerator when not needed.

5. Feed a little-used starter some flour or sweetener occasionally. Try reviving a sluggish starter with a little cider vinegar.

6. Watch amounts of salt and sugar in recipes. Too much salt slows down rising action, and too much sugar causes yeasts to overwork and exhaust their food supply.

7. Avoid metal utensils when working with sourdough. Glass or crockery containers that allow for expansion are pretty and practical.

8. Keep starter clean and lightly covered to discourage cats, kids and bacteria left from last night's supper. If a clear liquid rises to the top add a little extra flour and stir down.

9. Never put anything back into the starter pot but flour and water. The scummy, slimy pots of our forefathers and mothers resulted from scraping remains of their baking back into the starter. If starter turns orange or red, throw it away and catch another.

10. If all else fails—specialty and natural food stores sell dried crystals of existing and proven sourdough strains.

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Combine starter, liquid, shortening in a large ceramic bowl. Mix with wooden spoon until thoroughly blended. Gradually add sugar and one cup flour, mixing well. Then slowly add the remaining flour until a soft but firm ball forms. Knead for 8 to 10 minutes on a floured board until the dough is soft, smooth and elastic. Place in a warm, greased bowl and turn dough until upper side is greased. Cover and set to rise in a warm place. This should take about one hour. Punch down with a wooden spoon and let double in bulk again. Knead on floured board again for about 5 minutes.

Shape into a ball and place in a well-greased ovenproof round casserole. Or shape into a loaf and place in a well-greased nine-inch loaf pan. Cover and let rise until double in bulk. If desired, brush the top with beaten egg yolk and water mixture for a glossy surface.

Bake in preheated 400 degree oven for 35 to 40 minutes. Tap loaf—when it sounds hollow, the bread is finished. Makes one loaf.

SALTED SOURDOUGH WHITE BREAD

1 package commercial yeast (or
1 tablespoon powdered
yeast)

1 cup starter

1½ cups warm water

2 teaspoons sugar

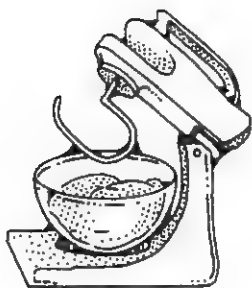
1½ teaspoons salt

5 cups flour - unbleached white
for best results

½ teaspoon soda

Blend 3½ cups flour with everything except soda. Let this mixture rise until double in bulk in a warm location. Mix soda with remaining flour and stir into doubled dough mixture. This should make a stiff dough that can be kneaded 8 to 10 minutes on a floured board until smooth and satiny.

Form into loaves and place in well-greased nine-inch loaf pans. Let rise again until doubled in bulk in a warm location. Bake at 400 degrees for 35 to 45 minutes or until done. A hollow sound when loaves are tapped indicates they're done. Makes two loaves.



Sourdough cooking can be taken almost as far as a cook wants to take it. I do a lot of cookie-baking and here are two cookie treats which fit my description of what a cookie should be: tasty without using too much sugar and robust enough to pack into a lunch bag. Both recipes produce cookies that are moist, chewy and taste like little cakes.

OLD-FASHIONED SPICY MOUNDS

¼ cup soft vegetable shortening
½ cup brown sugar
1 medium egg
½ cup molasses
½ cup sourdough starter

1 teaspoon baking soda dissolved in 1 tablespoon hot water

2 cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ginger
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon cloves
½ teaspoon cinnamon

Mix together shortening, sugar, egg, molasses and starter. Add the dissolved baking soda to this mixture. Then sift dry ingredients and mix well into first batch of ingredients.

Drop onto a lightly-greased cookie sheet in teaspoon-sized bites. Bake at 400 degrees for about 10 minutes. Makes 54 small cookies. I like larger cookies and manage to get about four dozen, 1½-inch-diameter cookies from this recipe. Larger cookies need to be baked a few minutes longer.

SOURDOUGH HERMITS

½ cup shortening
1½ cups brown sugar
2 eggs
½ cup buttermilk or sour milk
½ cup sourdough starter
2 cups sifted flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice
3 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
1 cup raisins, currants or finely cut dates
½ cup chopped walnuts (optional)

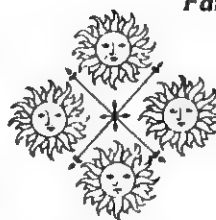
Cream shortening, sugar and eggs until light and fluffy. Stir in buttermilk (or sour milk) and starter. Then stir in sifted dry ingredients, rolled oats, nuts, and fruit. Drop by spoonful 2 inches apart on lightly-greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes. Larger cookies need about 15 minutes of baking. Makes about four to five dozen generous-sized cookies.

This recipe can be varied by reducing brown sugar and adding equal amounts of honey and/or molasses for a moister cookie.

Supermarkets stock canned and vacuum-sealed cultured buttermilk powder for cooking and baking. This solves the problem of having buttermilk on hand for recipes like the hermits. I usually find this buttermilk powder on shelves near baking supplies like flour and baking powder.

A regular contributor to Amherst Bulletin and Hampshire Life, Georgene Bramlage lives with her husband and three teen-age children in Leverett, Mass.

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UNDERNEATH

This must be the worst winter of all.

She fetched the last piece of wood from the porch and put it in the kitchen range. She sat in her chair close to the stove and shuddered in its heat, her arms folded and her chilled hands tucked close to her body, curled into the warmth of her sweater. Through the windows she could see the snow flinging a white sheet around the house, billowing in the wind.

Seems like it's snowed forever, never will stop. Room has a gray light to it like the snow is trying to get in, like it's creeping in on me.

As though to move against a weight she stood up, leaving the rocking chair to teeter, to nod briefly to itself in the silence. She walked into the chill near a window. Beyond the thick white swirl, she knew, were miles and miles of blowing snow and drifts. The fences were buried and there was nothing to show where the berry bushes were.

Nothing to show where I am, either. Bed's made, breakfast dishes done, towel hung up to dry over the stove. Yesterday morning about this time it was exactly the same and all the mornings before that. Do the same things and do them all over again, just as though I hadn't been here to make any difference. Nothing I do stays done or makes any change, seem like. Don't think Ty would notice if it did. When he gets back, with his new seed catalogs probably, he'll just sit looking them over. Not saying anything, just studying, over and over. About all he does this time of winter. Some folks look at TV but he's never got enough together to

get one. Listens to the radio, though.

Chilled, she moved away from the window and stood close to the stove, spreading her mottled and gnarled hands to catch the warmth.

Should rip that old sweater of Ty's. Something to do. Leastways get a ball of good yarn out of it. Maybe enough to knit up a new cap for him, or a scarf. Can't do much now. Fingers too stiff and swollen. Ty won't pay any mind, anyway. I'll just hang a cap on the coat peg and he'll just take and put it on without so much as a fare-thee-well.

Rubbing her aching hands together she walked into the parlor.

Hasn't changed for years and years. Couldn't ever get a new thing to pretty it up. If I die tomorrow not a soul would know I'd lived here, not to notice. Did crochet the tidies, though. Twenty, twenty-five years ago that was, maybe.

She shivered in the unheated room and pulled the sleeves of her sweater across her hands. The light in the room was tinged with the gray of lead by the snow piled high against the window panes.

Can't see what possessed Ty to go over town in all this. Not a word about it. Old fool. Seed catalogs can wait. He'll bring in more wood when he comes. Needn't mention it. He'll do it without telling.

She stood rigid, staring at the blank gray square of glass.

Out there's the stone wall, all buried now. And the land. There's my tulips right down there under the window. Never could see how they come up spring after spring, winter after winter. But this one beats them all. Can't see how they'll do it this

time. Ty'll come with his seed catalogs and come spring he'll plant and hoe and I'll cook and can. Just to tide us over another winter. Seems like there is no end to it, no use to it.

Stiffly she turned from the window, patting straight a doily on the maroon plush chair as she walked to the door of the bedroom. She stood near the bed looking from one snow-packed window to the other.

Can't see the road out there. Can't see if he's coming, with the snow piled so high, coming down so thick. Hard time he'll make of it, plunging and slewing. Awful cold if he gets stuck. Lane's the worst of it, drifted up as it is. Won't have a word to say about it when he gets here. Time was when we'd talk. Long time back it was. Winter wasn't so bad then, not so long. We could even say things with just looking. Maybe if—never had chick nor child all these years. Might have been different, kind of bright and lively. Yonder's the old graveyard. Folks buried deeper than ever this winter. No one to recall now what they said to each other, times like this. Had their last chance, poor souls. Wonder what they made of it. Makes me think of my old chair, rocks for a bit when I get up and then stops like I'd never sat in it, looks kind of lonesome. All them out there remembered for a while and then forgot. Ty'd think I'm plumb out of my mind, ideas like this. Probably thinks I'm foolish looking at the mountains so much, too. Don't think he cares, though. Can't see over to them now but they're still there, only things can't be fazed by the winter, standing in the cold and quiet. Kind of comforting.

THE SNOW

Fiction by Carol Margaret Stewart



As she left the room she stopped at the dresser and leaned closer to the mirror above it.

Old paper crumpled fine, my face is. Hair like the streaky snow in town. Ty don't look at me much, either. Can't say as I blame him. He's no great shakes to look at himself, hair so thin and teeth near gone. I better be putting the kettle on. He'll want something hot. Cocoa, maybe. Not that he'd say so.

She hurried through the cold rooms and stopped at the door to the kitchen. Ty stood there, white from head to foot with clinging snow, a slushy puddle around his feet. He held both hands out to her. Nestled in the brown cotton gloves was a long haired kitten. Its fluffy fur was the silver gray of a winter sky, its wide eyes, the smoky blue of the distant hills. Her fingers, so long cramped and lumpy, were to her eyes once more slim and straight and strong as they moved tenderly over the small silky body. She knew what the mirror could never tell her, that her hair swept back dark and smooth above her soft round cheeks. She glanced up at Ty with eyes she felt were large and bright. His eyes, blinking against the melting snow that trickled down the furrows of his face, glinted back at her, back through all the frozen years. §

Ms. Stewart writes from Wakefield, New Hampshire.

Photo by Bill Haynes

Town Meeting. Photo by Bill Haynes



TOWN MEETING

by F.C.J. Smith

The other day we had our town meeting up here north of Boston. It was held in the gym over at the high school and drew quite a sizable crowd. They managed to give over to us three hundred or so residents present a two-hundred and twenty-four page Annual Reports of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Town with Other Statistical Matter. Now it's just this Statistical Matter that we fancy, such as appointments of Fence Viewer, Field Driver, Measurer of Wood and Bark, Surveyor of Wood and Lumber, Care of Town Clock. It staggers us to think that the latter three positions are filled by the same man. What a responsible citizen of vast talent he must be. We also have a Moth Superintendent and Town Diarist, as well as a Mosquito Control Advisory Committee of one. "The one hundred year flood will be defined" by HUD, we were glad to learn. And we saved ninety dollars when our police chief, over the unspecified objections of two of our selectmen—one of whom is female—voted not to paint the two new cruisers dark blue with white trim, but rather to leave them the color they came with. Further into the Reports, we found a list of fourteen very good reasons why we should record births, something which, oddly, we had never found wanting in reason. Shortly thereafter followed the distressing information that out on Martins Pond Road they were having problems "with grades. Bulldozer gave up the ghost and could not get rid of the clay. Had we

had a normal winter everything would have been alright (sic)." Hear, hear. By our standards, the licensing situation seemed to have got a bit out of control. While we can readily admit to the need for a Common Victualler License, an Oleo License, and certainly a Shuffleboard License; in the same breath, we are frankly appalled at the four dollars someone had to fork over for a Sunday Music License. Also shocking was the rather subversive insinuation that man's best friend may need some reevaluating. "The past year has seen several changes in matters pertaining to dogs and the problems they cause." The mind whirs: truants from the two-income families in town? Dogs devouring the pigs' Monday garbage? Perhaps the dogs out at the New Pound in the Sanitary Landfill are polluting the place? We are just not told. More ominous is the Water Committee Report to the effect that they are "aware of the rumors that the pipe lines and equipment is (sic) all worn out. The rumors cannot be substantiated by normal repair records." What about abnormal repair records? What about the green water out on Higley Street and the brown water on Joy Lane? We can set aside our fears regarding the Light Department, however, for from the "Sale of Junk, Wire, Etc." they netted three hundred and forty dollars and twenty-one cents. It smacks of downright modernity that the Department of Natural Resources has been renamed the Department of Environmental Affairs. But it was the gentlemen at the Board of Health, under heavy fire most of the year over the Monday Garbage Collection for the Pigs,

owing to the seven thousand and fifty dollars this service cost us, who enhanced our confidence enormously. For instance, the Public Library is just going to have to straighten out its septic system, this despite awareness by all that such problems "continue to plague the center of town." The rabies shots we lined up for with our dogs will be good for two years, so "those who waited in line need not do so this year." "The rubbish pick-up problem in the Heights area was resolved with the help of residents. This was a good example of people working together to solve a problem." Masters of understatement, the Board informed us that "at times it seemed that the mosquitoes were winning the battle." And how's this one for good, sound judgment. "After reviewing all the information available on the location of the Community Kindergarten and Nursery School, the Board of Health recommended the school relocate to a more favorable site, away from existing orchards." The nerve, trying to put a school next to an orchard, anyway.

F.C.J. Smith lives in Groton, Mass., where she has been a copy editor and free-lance editor for many years.

THE SPRING ITCH

by F. Bell

It happened again this winter early in January when the mailman (knee-deep in snow) delivered the spring seed catalogs. Of course, my wife, anticipating their arrival, was

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right at my elbow, so hiding the catalogs was impossible.

I suspected the spring itch had struck her when she settled into my favorite chair with catalogs, paper and pen.

"What are we having for lunch?" I asked. When she didn't answer, I repeated the question.

"Sure," she answered vaguely.

The spring itch had definitely taken over. For the next few weeks my lifestyle would be jeopardized. Exotic meals would give way to plans for exotic gardens.

I scuffed my way to the kitchen, made a peanut butter sandwich and poured some milk. At least, some things in life are faithful, always there to comfort you.

Of course I'm in a blue funk. Nothing upsets my life more than the spring itch. I'm immune to it myself. It's warming enough, seeing what it does to my wife.

My wife's thinking is different from mine, anyway. Somehow, I can't get enthusiastic about raking, digging in the garden and fertilizing the lawn. It just keeps me weeding and mowing later, when I'd rather be fishing.

"Oh, Hon!" (the wife) "Let's have petunias out front and little pansy faces by the back door."

I sigh through the peanut butter. "But, dear," (I know it's no use) "last year aphids de-juiced all the petunias, and cutworms mowed down the pansies."

"That was *last year*."

I think back to last year: the floods in April; the hailstones in June; the summer-long drought; restricted water usage; Japanese beetles.

Then, there was that dang rabbit! He caused a family feud when he ate all the best lettuce. I opted to shoot him for stew, Mary wanted to fence in the whole garden, and Joey wanted me to catch the "cute little bunny" for a pet.

We never did settle the argument. While we feuded, that dang rabbit finished the lettuce. I just know he'll come back this year and bring all his relatives.

"Fred, come here a minute."

I go to her side, like a dutiful puppy.

"Can't you just *see* these marigolds in our garden with a bird bath in the middle?"

"Uh-huh" (for the cat to hide under).

She draws some lines on the paper. "We'll make our vegetable garden like this picture: lettuce, beets, carrots..."

(And not a weed in sight. My job, no doubt.) I look at the strawberries on the next page. Now *there's* something that interests *me*! I read: 'AS BIG AS HEN'S EGGS.' Hm-m-m-m.

"How about a few strawberry plants?" I ask.

"Well...all right."

I thumb through the pages. "I wonder if they have any melon seeds," I mused.

Mary gives a chuckle. "Oh, Fred, don't tell me *you're* catching the spring itch!"

I manage a sheepish grin. Who was it that said, "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em"?

Ms. Bell lives in Halifax, Mass.

DAYDREAMS OF A NEW HAMPSHIRE SPRING

by Ann Hart

Mesmerized by the colorful blur of zigzagging skiers,
Their shouts resounding as they meet the challenging deep powder;
I turn to see a small grove of pines—their tips frosted white,
The trees patiently await spring;
their task to guard a weathered picnic table and benches.

Soon, the fragrant green needles
will be bathed in the warm spring
sun
And the sprawling limbs will shelter
a chattering family on a Sunday
afternoon.
Soon, the moaning of the rope tow
engine and the monotonous clink-
ing of the chairlift
Will be replaced by the gentle
whooshing of the spring winds.
Soon, children will pick wild flowers
where once they had tumbled in
the snow;
Soon, returning robins will build
nests on the very limbs where
angry squirrels had admonished
intruding roars of snow machines;
Soon, rigid ice will warm into gentle
streams splashing over jagged
granite;
Soon, whirling snowflakes on a chill-
ing, gray afternoon
Will give way to the presence of
spring rain on sweet, new grass;
Soon, the laughter of skiers will fade
And their shouts will drift off in the
distant memories of winter.

Ann Hart is from Gilford, N.H.

A CURE FOR CABIN FEVER

by Deborah Kegel Ker

There is something that strikes us
all during the winter, and it leaves us
feeling lifeless and troubled. Some
folks are affected from the very onset
of winter, while others hold their
own until later in the season. Once
acquired, it may last a day or two, or it
may go on for several weeks. My case
usually arrives sometime in February.
By then it has been several weeks
since experiencing the excitement of
the holidays and will be several more
till the excitement of spring. Life
seems to be only in waiting or strange-
ly put on hold for a while. Boredom
sets in, and the senses are dulled. The

traditional cures for this condition
have already been overworked. Vege-
table and flower gardens have been
planned in a dozen ways. A stack of
books has been read by a cozy fire. At
times these cures are merely seda-
tives and contribute to the feeling of
lifelessness. They require very little
actual movement, so even the physi-
cal body become apathetic.

Through the years I've discovered
that the best way to alleviate this
condition called "cabin fever" is to get
away from the cabin and the confines
of indoors as often as possible. The
winter world is a special one to
behold, and the best way to appre-
ciate it is to experience it in all its
glory. This calls for an awakening of
the senses and an ability to come out
of one's self.

I rely on the world right outside my
home for this relief and look forward
to a long walk alone in winter. There
is something very elemental about it.
From the minutes of bundling up to
arriving home again, I am lifted and
released.

As I walk out the door and down
the snow-covered road to the pond, I
am acutely aware of the world around
me. The air is fresh with the scent of
pine and woodsmoke lingering lightly
in its midst. Its crispness stings my
face and turns my cheeks a rosey red.
Trees are heavy with snow, making
the lower branches hang close to the
ground. I brush against them, reliev-
ing them of their burden, as they
relieve me of mine. Nearby I can hear
the muffled gurgle of a stream run-
ning under the ice. I can envision the
water as it whirls and tosses over
rocks on the stream-bed. It has such
an incredible sound that begs to be
heard. There is also the rustle of the
wind through the tree-tops, and the
occasional chirping of a chickadee in a
bush. A coal black crow cries and
takes flight from a tall pine as I walk
by. Its sleek blackness appears almost
white against the sun. While walking

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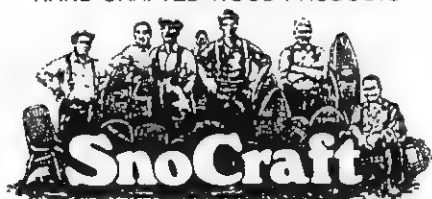
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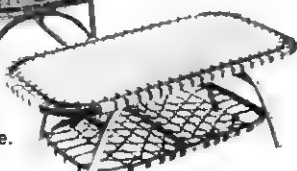
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along I note that the many winter colors are just as beautiful as the ones that fill me in summer. There are dozens of shades of grey, brown, white, and even green. Things that are unseen in summer now stand out clearly. Tree bark, grass, flowers, and ungathered fruit all appear differently now. Their lines and contours are not hidden by bright colors that distract the eye. From the sky to the earth they light up in individual clarity. Close to the edge of the frozen pond a shining red catches my eye, and I make my way across the ice to see what it might be. I'm surprised to discover rose hips. They are everywhere, brightly dotting the top of the snow, still clinging to their branches. A closer look gives me a hint of spring in the leaf buds that are closed tight against the wind and snow. There is hope in the thought of wild roses in bloom again. Even in winter they give a joy through their strength and beauty. Looking up at a slate grey sky I can see that the sun is beginning to set. It is just a glimmer of light through the dark pines and onto the ice. I hadn't noticed that so much time had passed since I first began the walk. I take one last look around me and carefully imprint the scene onto memory where I will hold it with loving care. Hearing only the rhythm of my footsteps, I slowly start the long walk home.

Already I can feel the fire warming me and taking the chill I'd been too busy to notice off my bones. At last I am calmed, renewed, and ready to return to everyday life again. A winter walk alone has a glorious effect on the spirit! It can also be yours to experience if only you open the cabin door and yourself to its magic. Cabin fever can only be cured by breaking away from your cabin and finding a special beauty that only winter has to offer!

No. Vassalboro, Maine is Deborah Kegel Ker's residence.

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View Askew

by Robert Skoglund

THE MUTUAL SUFFERING PROGRAM

Many marriages that end in divorce could be saved, according to my next door neighbor, Gramp Wiley.

Over sixty years of happiness with his wife Gladys have certainly given Gramp the right to speak with authority.

"Be content to let your wife be boss," Gramp advised a young friend who stopped in for an hour of counseling. "My personal secret is to let Gladys do everything. When she wants to cook and clean and scrub I never argue with her—if it keeps her happy I'm not going to complain. Of course, I'm not going to say what you should do, but it's worked for me.

"I've told some fellows to hang in there and weather it. I know that sooner or later they'll get to the point where they don't care, and when they reach that 'What's the sense?' point, marriage is a snap. It's all downhill from there.

"Young people don't seem to realize that anyone who's careful in selecting a mate can have an ideal marriage. Suppose that neither of you ever noticed that a wet towel or a wet water glass causes a white water stain on varnished surfaces. Perhaps you both drop your clothes beside the bed or in the bathroom and leave them there for days. Or it might be that you each have a cat that walks on the kitchen counter and eats out of your frying pan. Great! You, and no one else, should be married to each other.

"On the other hand, suppose that each one of you knocks the other down while rushing over to pick up a small raveling on the floor. You

wouldn't be able to eat or sleep just knowing it was there. You'd have a wonderful marriage and would probably spend enjoyable hours grooming each other like monkeys.

"No, don't look in the personal column of the newspaper for a mate. It will give you the idea that everyone in the world wants to take moonlight walks on lonely beaches. Young folks only run that kind of ad because it looks fashionable. I know a couple who walked moonlight beaches for years before they discovered that they both hated it.

"Which brings up the topic of Mutual Suffering. Gladys and I have been unusually lucky and somehow got out around it, but Mutual Suffering is the basis for most of the successful marriages you see today.

"Let's say that you are going to buy a car that your wife doesn't want. The Mutual Suffering system allows her to buy furniture that you don't want to balance it out. You understand that it has to be something of nearly equal value.

"It works the same with meals. If you have scallops for supper and she doesn't like them, she eats them without making a face or saying anything. The next night she serves pea soup to get back at you because you hate it, but you eat it with her to even it out.

"With Mutual Suffering man and wife each get at least a piece of what they'd like. You want to shingle the house because the rain is starting to leak in, but she feels a new kitchen stove is more important. You end up shingling half the roof and she buys a second hand stove with only two burners that work. That makes it fair.

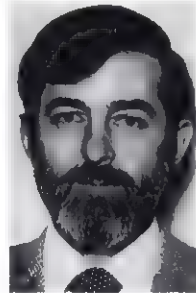
"She cuts her cuticles — 'Just getting rid of the dead skin' — which makes her hands all raw looking. It

drives you crazy but you don't say anything because she doesn't say a word when you bite your fork when you eat.

"Sometimes Mutual Suffering works both ways at once. Suppose you're going to the beach. You think she wants to go and she thinks you want to go. A week later you ask her to go to the golf tournament and she says, 'But I went to the beach with you last week.' That's when you first discover that neither one of you wanted to go.

"Then you have the impasse where nothing can be done—that's a situation where nobody owes anybody anything so you both sit home, sulk, and suffer nobly in silence while thinking, 'We never go anywhere, we never do anything.'"

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Robert Skoglund writes from his home at "The Center of the Universe," St. George, Maine. He can be heard on National Public Radio, and is available for M.C. and dinner speaking engagements.

... Carolyn Chute

disappointed, through no fault of her own. There will be a certain eschelon of the reading public, of course, who will not read this novel for fear of being offended by the sordidness of the Beans' world. Call it bourgeois snobbery if you like.

Undoubtedly Carolyn Chute is prepared to deal with this and couldn't care less, but how about the majority of urban Americans who, through their own naivete, will refuse to believe that the conditions Carolyn depicts in her novel actually exist amid our affluent society? After all, to accept the veracity of such a book would shatter the romantic image so many have of a country idyll. All too many Americans have refused ever to recognize the stark reality of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*.

Carolyn should be only too cognizant of this, for did she not live in her own halcyon world as a child? Ultimately, she may find that she will accomplish far more for her animal rejects than she will for the social ones.

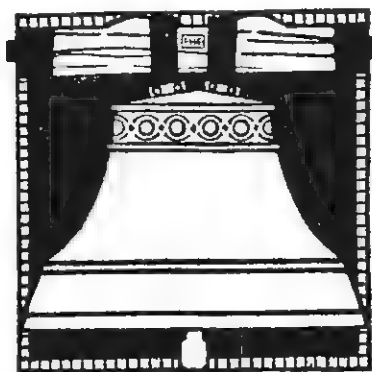
Be that as it may, Carolyn Chute intends to go on writing about the microcosmic world she knows best because, as she confesses, "I have never lived anywhere else but in Maine." §

MOTHER MAPLE

In spring days of yore
Indians awaited
A sugar-making moon.
Restless, yearning for
Mother Maple's lifeblood
Her full bosom they gashed.
Precious fluid flowed
In choice, birchbark vessels
Heated stones boiled the sap.
Recompense for toil
Maple sugar—fare
Tongue and spirit sweetener.

Delores Davis
Tucson, Arizona

... Old Man's Journey



shut, one other question oozed from the gap as he hiked: Wasn't it true that the *Yorktown* affair had been, well, long ago? Yes, the spring of '42! And hadn't he done many things since then...? He thought obliquely of a man who had raised a family and worked a farm.... As quickly as the strange, unwanted intimations flitted into his awareness, however, they dissipated, and he continued on with singleminded devotion.

At last, bedraggled, though oblivious to his state, he came to the crest of a small hill. Below, only a few streetlights of the town penetrated the late autumn fog. He halted, proudly erect as an explorer sighting a new land, and stared into the mist.

"There, by God!" he exclaimed in triumph. "Out there's the sea, and way out there's my ship! I'll go down to the port and get a room for tonight, 'n tomorrow be off for the Pacific."

Elated, he started down the hill toward the town.

He didn't know what made him stumble and fall, for he had been certain his strength and stamina remained unsapped. Perhaps he slipped on the greasy deck; at any rate, he suddenly found himself looking into the great deep vault above, a void of utter blackness except for

dots of tiny sparkles. His wind had left him, yet he knew a kind of comfort and peace transcending the agony of aching muscles. He lay back, confused, to let himself die there or be borne away, whatever came to pass.

And in that spot they discovered him. It was still dark when he awakened to a babble of sounds. Shapes moved in and out of his vision, blotting the stars, distorted among darting lights. The forms possessed voices which spoke of him, and occasionally to him with soothing words of comfort.

"It's him all right," he heard a man say, "believe it or not. How did he get way down here?"

A lovely white apparition hovered over him, her voice soft and her breath sweet. "Andrew, you'll be just fine," she said, holding his hand. "Dear, dear..." she added, teary and faltering. She brushed wisps of hair from his eyes, then pressed her palm against his forehead.

"I must get to my ship," he explained, trying to upraise himself. "Down there's the harbor...I must get to my ship!"

"No, no, we'll go on home," said the girl. "Just rest here and you'll be fine, Andrew."

The men rolling the stretcher toward him spoke in low tones, yet he heard.

"Thinks there's water down there, don't he?"

"Yeah," came the reply. "Must be at least a hundred miles to the nearest ocean from here...." §

Stewart Goodwin is an English teacher at Mount Blue High School in Farmington, Maine. His stories have been published in *The Antioch Review* and *Kennebec*.

Notes From Brookfield Farm

by Jack Barnes

Anyone who has ever lived on a New England farm knows fully well that it takes twelve months of the year to get ready for winter. Now I know that a statement like this will cause eyebrows to be raised, so I shall elaborate on my opening statement for the benefit of those who have never spent much time on a farm.

First of all, calendars in the North-country are totally misleading. Officially, of course, winter begins with the winter solstice on December 22 and terminates on March 21, the vernal equinox. But, around here, winter does not pay much attention to calendars. The ponds usually freeze over much earlier, and it is not uncommon to have a good snow cover before or around Thanksgiving. Now I shall admit that this has not been exactly the case the last few years. But I am extremely lucky here at Brookfield Farm if I can plant my peas any spring during my Easter vacation. Those who live a little closer to the ocean can usually count on getting about the business of planting somewhat earlier on an average year. For example, when it is snowing hard here at Brookfield Farm, it oftentimes will be raining ten miles closer to Portland. In other words, Brookfield Farm very definitely is located in what we call locally the "snow bowl."

Last October, I was out in the woods cutting down some trees close to the road where the old narrow gauge railroad used to run when one of our local sages, who was on his way down to Barker Pond, paused to

pass the time of day. I was sharpening my saw.

"Ye gitten' next wintah's wood put up?" he queried.

Now for those who may be unfamiliar with country life or who have never cut their own wood, I had better clarify that he was not referring to this winter that is drawing to a close, but the next winter—the one most of us hope will take its time about setting in. Now, the ideal situation is to always keep two years' supply of wood cut, split, and stacked under cover. That way, one is always burning well-seasoned wood, and there is no worry about running out of wood if winter decides to hang around long after the calendar tells us it is spring. So I stopped filing long enough to give the old gentleman the answer I knew he had been waiting to hear—"Ayah"—and then resumed my filing.

Now I knew fully well that when I answered in the affirmative back there in October that there was a good chance I might have to dip into that supply of wood by March, but I was not about to let on to him that there was even a remote possibility this would happen. Yet, here it is March, and a few hours ago I was standing up at the top of the hill looking down the muddy road at the bend where my farmhouse sits. I stood there for a few moments watching the gray smoke curling upwards toward a pewter sky, and I could smell its astringent tang in the crisp air. It is gratifying, of course, not to have to shell out a goodly amount of dollars every year for fuel, but I am sorry to say that the smoke coming out of my chimney is from the wood I was cutting last October for next winter; and I have spent most of today cutting wood to compensate for what I am burning now. Yet, according to the way things ought to go, the wood I cut today should be for the winter after next.

Page 52 . . .

You Don't Say ICE CUTTING

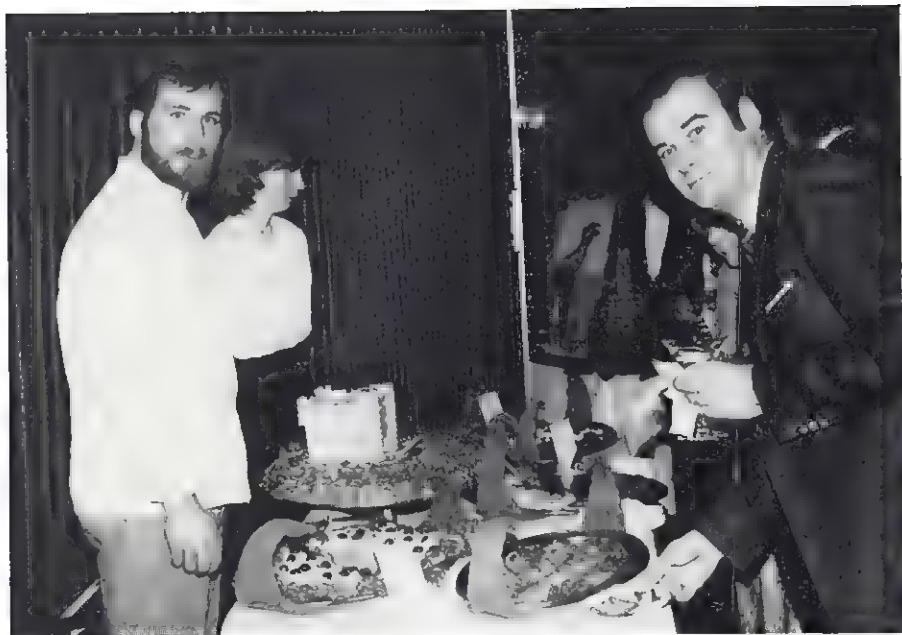
When I was growing up in Sebago, I often heard the story about two farmers—a father and son—who lived on a farm at the foot of Jim Shaw Hill. The farm had more than its share of rocks, but these two men managed to scratch out a living and rear a good-sized family. Most of the children went off to college and eventually returned to the family farm with an education and a better perspective on life, which is essential to good farming today. I can remember both men very well.

The father was an elderly gentleman with a long flowing beard always stained with tobacco juice, but that was standard coating for a beard in those days. The son, who was called Verny, was a tall taciturn man, somewhat handsome and clean-shaven. He was intelligent, but shy, and above all he was absolutely obedient and respectful to his father. Out of habit, he would never act until he received orders from his superior.

Now, one winter, the two of them were cutting ice at Fitch's Mill Pond in East Sebago when the father slipped and fell into the icy water. He floundered around a bit, his beard helping to keep him afloat. Verny stood stoically, observing his father, who finally looked up at his son and drawled, "Pull me out, Verny."

Only then did Verny obediently reach down with one massive hand and effortlessly pull his father from the water.

Jack Barnes



Scenes from last year's "Taste." At left, Chef Wilfred Beriau, president of N.H. Chapter, American Culinary Federation. Below left, Dick Flynn and Blythe Damour.



Henry VIII would have loved it!

THE TASTE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

by Patricia White

(Photographs by Juanita Perkins)



What's the Taste of New Hampshire? Pick one: an ice cream mountain, a bite of delicious air, the Annual Event of the American Culinary Federation, New Hampshire Chapter. All three are correct.

The finest pastry chefs, cooks, and hors d'oeuvres creators meet and compete every Spring in one of the many outstanding inns which the popular tourist area and ski mecca offers.

Last year, at Fox Ridge Resort in North Conway, over 300 people attended the bash—the 6th Annual "Taste." About half were related in some way to the food service industry; they were chefs purveyors, innkeepers, sales representatives, cooks and their families. The other half were "the general public"—people who had heard about the event through advertising in the press or on the air.

Approximately forty chefs displayed their artistry; each was given an assignment which ranged from ice sculptures to "bouquets" of

vegetables.

The displays of food were magnificent to see and wonderful to taste. Suckling pig with fresh ham, turkey, tongue, corned beef, and baked ham competed as entrees with a Steamship Round of Chicken Chasseur, Shrimp Fried Rice, Veal Piccata in Marinara Sauce, O'Brien Potatoes, Bouquetiere of Vegetables, Swiss Steak, and Stuffed Sole.

There were Swiss salads, potato salads, macaroni salads, stuffed eggs, jellied molds, and innumerable other crispy vegetables.

Fresh rolls, pecan buns, and date nut bread topped off the main meal.

Black Forest torte and other tortes such as Strawberry Romanoff, Seven Layer Wilderness, Wine Creme; tarts such as fresh fruit, franchipane; Nougatine Gateau, Maple Eclairs, Petit





Fore Glace, Chocolate Grand Marnier Cake, and various French pastries were some of the desserts.

The event was a gourmand's paradise...a gastronomical orgy...a culinary art exhibition.

One short evening could not do justice to all that was offered. About all you could do was close your eyes, turn around three times, and point.

The Federation gives awards to its prize-winning chefs at the end of the evening, and proceeds go toward scholarships to future chefs.



Since I am a native-born Mainer who was well-educated in the use of axe, bucksaw, and crosscut saw before I was ten, it is downright disgraceful to run out of wood in March.

... Brookfield Farm (continued from page 49)

Since I am a native-born Mainer who was well-educated in the use of axe, bucksaw, and crosscut saw before I was ten, it is downright disgraceful to run out of wood in March. And, unfortunately, running out of wood before the snow melts is not my only concern. There is always the hay supply. I am happy to say that this year I am going to have enough to last my flock of sheep; that is, of course, providing spring sets in by the middle of May so that there is green grass in the pasture for them to graze.

My problem is the same as any other farmer who works out five days a week and tries to run a farm on whatever time he can salvage. Since I have two teaching jobs and try to do some writing, there is very little time to spare. If I have a day off in the dead of winter, I may venture out in a good size snow storm to cut up some wood on one lot or another when I had much rather be in the warm house reading or writing. But I am fully cognizant that if I do not plod through the snow and get some trees cut up, there will not be any warm house next winter (unless I subsidize the OPEC nations). Even though I have ties with Nigeria, my good old Maine pride in self-sufficiency negates any inclination I might have to be philanthropic.

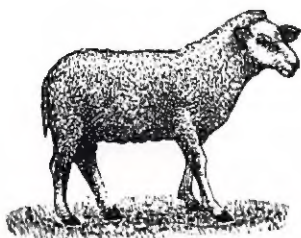
And so I keep telling myself each winter that I am going to fell more trees and get ahead of the game. The

trouble is that I cut selectively, which means that I cut a tree here and there so that more sunlight can get to the white pine and hemlock. Then again, I am an ardent lover of trees, and I often spare a tree even though it would provide me with a goodly supply of wood and is located in an area where I can get to it easily. I will spare it just because of its aesthetic beauty. If I were to cut it down, its absence to me would be as noticeable as a person missing a front tooth.

I agree with Shintoists and Henry David Thoreau that trees have souls too. I wear earphones for two reasons: (1) to protect what hearing I have left from the noisy power saw (one of the few recent inventions I consider indispensable) and (2) to prevent myself from hearing the mournful soul of the tree I am cutting down.

During the course of the year, a number of people stop by just to see a man getting on in years who loves the land and calls his animals and poultry by name. I would not trade places with them for anything in the world, but I think that anyone who has a romantic dream to own a small farm in Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont ought to be mentally and physically prepared to spend twelve months of the year preparing for winter.

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Bolster Monumental Works, Oxford, ME . . . p. 44
Cilla's Shop, Norway, ME . . . p. 38
Cornish Country Inn, Cornish, ME . . . back cover
Folsom's, Alfred, ME . . . p. 19
Friendly River Fretted Instruments,
Cornish, ME . . . p. 45
Julia E. Gibb Realty, Plaistow, NH . . . p. 4
Little Ossipee Florist, Limerick, ME . . . p. 44
Long Look Farm, Paris Hill, ME . . . p. 38
Offerman's, Milwaukee, WI . . . p. 46
Oxford Mill End Store,
Oxford, ME . . . inside back cover
Oxford Power Equipment,
Oxford, ME . . . p. 44

Perham's Maine Mineral Store,
West Paris, ME . . . p. 45
R. S. Batchelder, Kezar Falls, ME . . . p. 45
Robert L. Milton Agency,
So. Paris & Auburn, ME . . . inside back cover
Romah Motor Inn, Naples, ME . . . p. 38
Round Table Agency, Cornish, ME . . . p. 38
SnoCraft, Norway, ME . . . p. 46
Steve's Heating Oil . . . p. 44
Sunny Villa, Ossipee, NH . . . p. 39
The Lovejoy Agency . . . p. 45
WOXO Radio, Norway, ME . . . p. 39
Yokohama Restaurant, Gorham, NH . . . p. 38
Your Finishing Touches, Kezar Falls, ME . . . p. 44



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